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FOUNDATIONAL GOODS AND PRIVATE LIVES

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The aim of this paper is to articulate the conflict between impartial and partial views of obligation. It is also an attempt to develop a more unified view of our obligations to others, and to explore how such a reconciliation might alter our understanding of how we should treat those less well off than ourselves. Partial obligations are those that have their origin in our particular relationships with others, and so are only owed to those specific others, such as our friends, children and parents. By contrast, impartial obligations originate in our concern for fairness and equality, and as such they are owed to all people, regardless of their attachment to us or lack thereof. My two central claims are that (a) it is both possible and desirable to work out an integrated view of obligation which eases the tension between the impartial and partial views and (b) such an integrated view will necessitate a revision of our commonly held views on how we ought to treat the needy.

My more general objective is to see if a moral framework can be worked out in which partial attachments do not come across as unfair, or alternatively, that morality (impartially-construed) does not come across as unreasonably demanding. On the one hand, the partial views looks *too* partial. In particular, since it allows strangers in need (unrelated others) to be seen as at best the objects of supererogatory concern, it seems to be not nearly morally demanding enough. On the other hand, the impartial view seems far too demanding—at the extreme seeming to require abandonment of the commitments to particular persons and projects that enrich our lives and to a considerable extent are central to individual character. In response to these concerns, the framework developed here qualifies and combines the partial and impartial views, in a manner that casts both types of obligation as making morally reasonable demands.

I am starting from the common-sense view that we *do* have genuine obligations to others. In taking up the question of how our partial and impartial obligations may be reconciled, I am addressing those people who are already convinced that morality may justifiably require things of them, but find that these requirements sometimes come into conflict with one another. Hence, I am not addressing concerns about the existence or legitimacy of moral obligations that a thoroughgoing sceptic, or egoist, may have.

I am seeking an integrated view of morality which both illuminates and reduces many of the substantial moral conflicts with which people are often faced. It is my view that such a framework will be both more theoretically satisfying, and will make it easier to identify and fulfill our moral obligations.

TWO MORAL WORLDS

So, what exactly is the theoretical problem at issue? I will begin my answer to this question with descriptions of what I call (following Thomas Nagel) the "Personal Moral World" and the "Impersonal Moral World."

In the Personal Moral World, we experience ourselves as attached, in different ways, to specific people, places and projects. We live in particular communities, work for particular employers, have friends and families, and enjoy certain leisure and educational activities. These are the types of close personal relationships and attachments to individuals, groups and pursuits of which the Personal Moral World is made. Together, they form a web that gives our lives meaning and structure.

As Nagel notes, this world "involves strong personal allegiance to particular communities of interest or conviction or emotional identification, larger than those defined by family or friendship, but still far less than universal."[1] In this world, we are mainly concerned with our own lives and the lives of the people we care about. We can think of ourselves as being at the "centre of a set of concentric circles of rapidly diminishing identification with others."[2] From here, we judge morally correct behaviour by referring to the concrete histories, expectations, needs and personalities of the people with whom we are in various types of relationships.

Despite their enormous variety, it is still possible to identify some common moral features among many diverse relationships which can help us understand their significance for ethical reasoning. The fundamental moral features of close relationships are that they (1) are non-instrumentally valuable, and (2) generate special obligations.

(1) Thomas Donaldson comments that there "is something about the particularity of those persons which helps ground the value and the commitment of the [relationship]; and which would be lost by substitution. Your [relationship] is with a particular person. This goes beyond the mere fact that the value must be grounded in a particular relationship."[3] He also observes that the value of close relationships is grounded in a basic concern for, or identification with, the other, rather than being derived from a larger concern for behaving morally. In other words, we do not care about the welfare of particular people, or about sustaining particular relationships, because of the good consequences these practices will bring about. Rather, we care about people and relationships for their own sakes. Once we are in relationships, *then* they can provide us with some of the parameters for our moral lives, but we do not enter into them as a result of moral requirements. In many cases, we do not *enter into* them at all, but merely find ourselves situated in relation to particular people and groups.

It is this concern for particular others that characteristically motivates people to fulfill obligations in the Personal Moral World. This type of motivation just highlights the fact that we think close relationships generally have intrinsic, rather than instrumental, value. We consider them morally important in and of themselves, without reference to some further end. It is "a special concern for [the welfare of] *this* person, or *that* person, or *these* persons, and not for *persons in general*, that informs relationships of family and friendships and provides much of their moral significance."[4]

(2) As a result of their intrinsic value, we come to see special relationships as generating special responsibilities. Sam Scheffler points out that *what it means* to value a relationship non-instrumentally is just to "see a person as a source of special claims in virtue of the relationship between us."[5] People routinely make moral claims on one another by invoking their mutual involvement in a relevant relationship. For instance, claims can be made on a parent's or friend's time, on a citizen's loyalty to her country, or on a mentor's professional advice and encouragement. When we are operating in the Personal Moral World, we see ourselves as able to make positive claims on particular others, over and above those we can make on all human beings.

Of course, special obligations can take a number of other forms, such as compensation for past wrongs, and return on benefits received.[6] I will not discuss these types of obligations at length here, since they are generally seen to be compatible with both the Personal and Impersonal Worldviews. As such, these other sorts of special obligations do not contribute to the principal conflict which I am examining.

Critics of partiality (and so of the Personal World) may well doubt that special relationships give rise to special responsibilities. Indeed, it has often been argued that our personal relationships only *seem* to generate responsibilities, because we feel so naturally generous and kindly toward people we care about and with whom we share common interests. Such critics argue that the commitment we feel to these people is the result of natural, spontaneous benevolence and so, while it may be a powerful emotion, it does not denote the existence of a moral obligation. The sphere of moral regulation, so this objection goes, is not determined by whether or not I have benevolent feelings towards this or that person.

Indeed, we do not normally think of morality as the kind of thing which is contingent on the highly changeable mental and emotional states of individuals. However, this does not mean that relationships do not generate special responsibilities. My relationships neither come into and out of existence at a rapid rate, nor does their existence depend exclusively on how I feel right now. Scheffler argues that "one's relationships to other people give rise to special obligations when they are relationships that one has reason to value."[7] It is the value of the relationships which creates the obligations, and this value comes from the meaning that relationships give to our lives, and not from our feelings of benevolence.

We may well feel anger, disappointment and embarrassment when we contemplate certain people to whom we are attached, but this does not mean that those same attachments are not the root of considerable meaning and value in our lives. Relationships are the contexts in which we learn, grow and come to understand how we are related to the wider world. It is hard to imagine a plausible blueprint for human welfare that does not include genuine love, friendship and trust. They are some of the things that make our lives worth living, despite their tendency to generate emotions such as sadness and frustration as often as they produce feelings of love and comfort.

Not all relationships will be valuable in the sense that they are significant sources of meaning in our lives. They will be too fleeting, too superficial, or too traumatic. But the ones that do *are* valuable, and it is their value as contributions to our lives which make

them the source of special responsibilities. If we do not look out for the welfare of the other person or people, then we are not protecting that value.

The Personal World also encompasses one's commitments to oneself and to the projects that one deems to be valuable. John Kekes notes that we can conceive of this world as including our concerns about creating good lives and characters, in the sense that our commitments to particular people and projects are constitutive of who we are and so substantially shape our characters and life-plans.[8] We set goals and make commitments with regard to who we want to be and how we want our lives to unfold. Insofar as we take these goals seriously as things worthy of our efforts, they also act as moral constraints on us and create moral guidelines for us.

How so? John Cottingham comments that "adding special extra weight to one's own concerns" seems to be required for thinking of oneself as an individual, or as "a person with a distinctive identity."[9] To be a person with a history, a prospective future, ongoing commitments, unfulfilled desires and aspirations is to be *involved*. This involvement in things we deem valuable puts constraints on us and obliges us to spend our time, energy and resources on them. If I aspire to be well educated because I think that is a worthwhile kind of person to be, then I must spend a certain amount of time on my studies, or else I will fail to become the sort of person I want to become. Bernard Williams calls the kinds of individual commitments which are identity-forming "ground projects."[10] He describes them as the kinds of pursuits that provide the "motive force which propels [people] into the future and gives [them] a reason for living."[11] Ground projects give rise to constraints and guidelines for positive action because they are an important source of meaning and integrity in the narrative of our lives.

In short, the Personal World is constituted by obligations that arise out of personal attachments of various kinds and those personal projects which arise out of our own commitment to living good lives.

If the Personal World encompasses all our special relationships, commitments and obligations, then what constitutes the Impersonal World? The Impersonal World is grounded in the basic intuition that all human beings are equally valuable. There have been many attempts at formalizing this intuition, which often cash out in very different prescriptions for action. The equal value of people is usually translated into moral precepts which demand some type of equal respect or impartiality. Williams sums up the common elements of impartial views with a Kantian flavour when he says,

> the moral point of view is specially characterized by its impartiality and its indifference to any particular relations to particular persons, and moral thought requires abstraction from particular circumstances and particular characteristics of parties, including the agent except in so far as these can be treated as universal features of any morally similar situation.[12]

Abstracting from personal interests and motivations in this manner is done in the name of fairness and affords people equal consideration. It is the mindset required for employing the basic principle that one ought to treat like cases alike.

Utilitarian and consequentialist perspectives capture yet another dimension of the Impersonal World. Their main claim is that "everyone is to count for one and none for more than one," when we are calculating what course of action would maximize happiness. This is another expression of our basic intuition that people should be treated equally, only it stresses the importance of taking each person's *interests* into account. Here, people are treated equally in that, for instance, my children's interests are not weighted more heavily than other children's in decisions about what I ought to do. Sidgwick puts a classic utilitarian spin on the idea of equal consideration when he says that "the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view . . . of the Universe than the good of any other; unless, that is, there are special grounds for believing that more good is likely to be realized in one case than in the other."[13]

Nagel is describing this point of view when he suggests that, once we recognize that everyone starts with a particular set of interests and concerns, we need only "remove ourselves in thought from our particular position in the world . . . without singling out as *I* the one we happen to be."[14] This allows us to identify which concerns *simply matter*, and not merely which ones matter to us.

In contrast to the Personal World (which gives pride of place to personal concerns), it is clear that in the Impersonal World we are attempting to put aside our particular interests and differences, in order to make a disinterested assessment of what would count as fair or equal treatment in particular cases. The above types of rules and conceptions of equality demonstrate how we go about *reasoning* in the Impersonal World, but what kind of practices or situations demand this approach?

The perspective characteristic of the Impersonal Worldview is used when we make judgments about fairness in distribution, procedures, and the application of rules, such as a mother giving fair portions of pie to her children, or allowing all parties to a dispute to put forward their views and concerns.

Additionally, the Impersonal World embraces impartial duties that we are often asked to carry out in our public life. Far from being excessively abstract, we operate quite comfortably in this world every day in our official roles as citizens, judges, teachers and businesspeople. In this moral sphere we are required to abstract from our personal relationships when making certain types of ordinary decisions and carrying out certain duties, such as hiring staff and grading assignments. This is also the moral world we are occupying when we object to discrimination in the forms of nepotism, racism and sexism.

The foregoing discussion is not intended to suggest that the Personal World is somehow lived or experienced separately from the Impersonal World, but rather only to specify what kinds of moral concerns are within the domain of each. The two moral worlds overlap considerably in practice, and we usually have no problem moving freely between them. Our moral difficulties arise in the area of overlap, where the two views demand different courses of action.

THE CONFLICT

This description of the two Moral Worlds makes it apparent that neither one on its own is entirely satisfactory when judged according to our moral intuitions and common practices. We need both in order to make moral judgments in a broad array of contexts, but when we are considering some questions, the set of obligations embedded in the Personal World seems too partial, and those in the Impersonal World seem too demanding.

In exactly what way does the Personal Worldview seem *too* partial? Scheffler draws this out well when he explains what happens when I make a new friend. "[T]hree changes in my responsibilities have taken place: (1) I now have duties to that person which I did not have before, (2) my duties to her may cause me not to do things for strangers that I otherwise would have done and (3) my duties to her now take priority over those I have to others simply as human beings. This means that I am required to help her if I cannot help both her and a stranger. I am now permitted to do things which allow the friendship to flourish in place of things that help others, and I benefit from the duties she now has towards me.

Scheffler asks, why "should our friendship give rise to a distribution of responsibilities that is favorable to us and unfavorable to other people?"[15] Providing advantages that work to the detriment of others in this way seems unjustifiable, if we take the equal value of people seriously.[16] Finally, in the Personal Moral World obligations can either take the form of non-interference (with people at large), or positive actions taken as a result of an obligation to a specific person. Few obligations to people generally take a positive form. This conception of obligation fits a little too closely with self-interest (loosely-construed), and so is somewhat suspect. It seems too comfortable to say that the only positive obligations I have are to people who play a central role in my life, because this leaves me so much room to pursue things that I enjoy, without ever having to ask if these pursuits should take precedence over the welfare of other human beings. It allows me to cut myself off morally from other human beings in an artificial fashion.

While the partial view may seem too easy, the impartial view seems too demanding. In its most extreme forms it seems to require abandonment of the commitments to particular persons and projects that constitute the main fabric of our lives. A good example of this is Peter Singer's prescription that "we ought to give [to charities] until we reach the level of marginal utility—that is, at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift."[17]

Given the current economic situation of the worst-off people in the world, this type of extreme recommendation runs up against two main lines of objection, related to demandingness. The first is that there are so many people who need help that the individual sacrifice required would be both immense and permanent. The temporal and financial indeterminacy of the obligation makes it seem to demand heroic efforts on the part of everyone, and so appears to be *prima facie* too burdensome.

The second type of objection characterizes the demandingness of the Impersonal Worldview as positively pernicious. Moral requirements this strenuous and extensive effectively "empty out" a person's life and identity. A human element in both morality

and life in general is thereby lost. All people come to be seen as generic "others" to whom we owe obligations, rather than singling out some for special affection and meaningful interaction. My own children and friends come to be seen from the perspective of the Universe, and so the tangible, everyday nature of our love is diminished or eliminated.

Finally, if moral obligations were this demanding, then they would require us to give up all other aspects of life, and so turn us into moral automatons. We would live solely in order to be moral, rather than being moral as part of a larger vision of the good life. We would become faceless functionaries who carry out moral obligations but are otherwise indistinguishable. As such, we would be subject to a kind of moral tyranny. The argument is that there is a substantial loss here of liberty, individuality, and valuable human undertakings.

The significance of this dilemma should not be underestimated. People encounter this conflict many times throughout the course of their lives, and it is a central problem for governments when drafting poverty-related policy. If we care about being moral, then we ought to undertake the task of identifying and justifying a coherent view of some kind. That way we can be sure that we are not acting in a manner that goes against our most fundamental moral conceptions.

What would it take for us to make our moral notions coherent, and thus, both more satisfying and practically viable? It is clear that we must either (1) assign priority to the Personal World over the Impersonal, (2) assign priority to the Impersonal World over the Personal, or (3) opt for an Integrated World view, which affords them roughly equal weight. The third strategy will be adopted here, since to put a premium on one view or the other would be to give short shrift to some serious moral considerations. This amounts to making moral decisions without adequately weighing the relevant data.

A Framework for Resolution

I will now attempt to develop a conception of the good that can both incorporate the obligations which arise out of special relationships and also leave room for other, more impartial considerations. My proposal is to bring those obligations that arise from partial relationships and those that stem from the impartial concern for human welfare into the same, pluralistic framework. This framework consists of several distinct, though general, equally-weighted, valued ends and activities. The idea is that there are some human abilities and states of being which, given that human beings are the kind of creatures they are, make up a set of goods that are the foundation of good lives. These will be called "foundational goods."

I will focus on individuals' obligations in their private lives, as friends, lovers, brothers, parents, etc., but not for instance, as citizens or public officials. Simply put, the question I want to answer is how can we combine several "different goals or virtues or standards, which we feel we cannot repudiate but which seem to demand incompatible things of us[?]"[18]

I agree with Charles Taylor when he says that historically we "have been maneuvered

into a restrictive definition of ethics, which takes account of some of the goods we seek, e.g. utility and universal respect . . . while excluding others, . . . largely on the grounds that the former are subject to less embarrassing dispute."[19] I am putting forward a view that does not exclude certain types of partial goods, since I think anything integral to human welfare should be taken into account when we are trying to determine just prescriptions for our actions and life-plans. The fact that it is difficult to successfully combine and juggle diverse kinds of goods is exactly why we need to examine them.

To this end, the remainder of the paper will be composed of two sections. The first will be a detailed explanation of the pluralistic conception of the good which makes this reconciliation project work. I will compile what I think is an instructive (though perhaps not comprehensive) list of foundational goods and elaborate briefly on the relevant features of each. I will also make clear the relationship of foundational goods to their conceptual counterparts—*relative goods*—and develop the criteria by which to judge whether a given good is one or the other.

In the second section, how personal attachments and relationships fit into this pluralistic conception of the good will be discussed. I will also undertake to delineate where one can be legitimately partial in one's individual choices and pursuits, and where such partiality begins to be unacceptable.

SECTION I: FOUNDATIONAL GOODS

The following is a summary of the conceptual characteristics of foundational goods:

- They are not reducible to mental states, and do not derive their importance from the subjective preferences of individuals.
- They are non-aggregative, which means that they are both indivisible and not susceptible to being made part of some other, larger good.
- They are intrinsically valuable. (They may *incidentally* be the means to something someone desires, but their value does not inhere in their instrumentality.)
- They are independent, ultimate ends. We seek them for their own sake and see them as individually worthy of pursuit and sustenance.
- They are things which people need as prerequisites for building good lives.

For the purposes of the rest of my discussion, the list of foundational goods includes: respect, education, attachments (relationships and ground projects), cultural membership and health (REACH). The value of foundational goods originates in their close connection with fundamental needs of human beings. As William Galston observes, "There are some needs that all or nearly all human beings have in common." [20] REACH are not these common needs themselves (which belong to individual people), but rather the things which people need to fulfill them.

Foundational goods are not *benefits* in the way that term is normally understood. "Benefit" connotes something added on to a pre-existing state of wholeness.

Foundational goods are not benefits in this sense, but are the fulfillment of needs. Their lack is understood to be a deficit for any given individual. It is possible for someone to forgo the pursuit or continued possession of a foundational good, but any such act would be understood as a sacrifice. Anyone who rejects a foundational good, for any amount of time, can be expected to provide his reasons against pursuing or possessing them, while no reasons must be given in their favour. Not having a foundational good is missing out on something that is humanly enriching—something that presents itself as *prima facie* something that ought not to be absent from a human life.

In a similar manner to Galston, I am developing this notion of foundational goods as the basis for my further analysis of justice. Also following him, I do not claim that they provide a blueprint for the production of total moral harmony or that "morality as a whole can be traced back to them."[21] I am open to the possibility that there may be additional foundational goods, though if my original list is accepted, then other ones at least must be compatible with them and share the characteristics set out earlier.

Now that I have identified the shared conceptual features of foundational goods, I will touch on their individual peculiarities. Despite the underlying similarities which I have pointed out, they are still quite a heterogeneous group.

How health is related to the fundamental needs of human beings is obvious. It is the physical state that allows and sustains existence and unimpaired bodily functioning. Its value does not depend on an individual's subjective preference for it, as we can see from the following example: If someone were to go on a hunger strike, then he would probably not possess the foundational good of health. Even in this case, health does not cease to be a good for him; he just chooses not to have it. This point is relevant to all foundational goods—we do not have to prefer them in order for them to be good for us from an external point of view.

Education, in its most limited sense, is what allows us to become reasonably self-sufficient and self-directing adults. We are educated by our parents in the activities of walking, talking, bathing, eating and (sometimes) working. These are all basic life skills that are needed for effective survival and personal development. Since the complexity and number of requirements for being a self-sufficient adult have increased greatly over the last 300 years, then it is reasonable to say that the extent of education that can be classed as a foundational good has extended also.

There is a problem here of how to establish standards of "necessary" education and health care. If we do not set such standards, then we cannot distinguish between what is a foundational good and what is an added benefit or luxury. Nonetheless, we can set reasonable standards by looking at the amount and variety of nourishment that can protect people from an early death, at what preventive medical treatment is easily distributed and effective against commonplace threats, and what amount of education allows people to contribute to society and be part of the economy. These standards might be different depending on the place and time they are set, but the fact that they can change over time does not mean that they are hopelessly vague.

The claim that cultural membership is a foundational good might seem strange at first. It isn't usually thought of as something that fulfills a need, since it is rarely lacking. We can see that it really is a basic element of good lives when we think about what

culture is—it is, first and foremost, "a context of choice."[22] Cultures are the wide contexts within which we shape ourselves, are shaped, and come to understand the meanings of things. Our culture partially constitutes our identities, and through our belonging to it, becomes the context of meaning for our lives. Even though cultures are changing and developing to some extent, they are still concrete entities, and so are not reducible to the mental states of their members. Will Kymlicka comments:

> The decision about how to lead out lives must ultimately be ours alone, but this decision is always a matter of selecting what we believe to be the most valuable from the options available, selecting from a context of choice which provides us with different ways of life. . . . This is important because the range of options is determined by our cultural heritage. . . . We decide how to lead our lives by situating ourselves in these cultural narratives, by adopting roles that have struck us as worthwhile ones. . . . Our language and history are the media through which we come to an awareness of the options available to us, and their significance; and this is a precondition of making intelligent judgments about how to lead our lives.[23]

Additionally, it is membership in *particular* cultures that fulfill human needs and not culture generally, as demonstrated by the distress certain groups have felt when theirs has been forcibly suppressed, such as those belonging to Canada's First Nations peoples. Indeed, only when a given culture has been taken away from a group can we see with real clarity the need that it fulfills. Again, Kymlicka provides a valuable insight:

> The connection between personal identity and cultural membership is suggested by a number of considerations. Sociologists of language note that our language is not just a neutral medium for identifying the content of certain activities, but itself is content, a "reference for loyalties and animosities," a "marker of the societal goals, the large-scale value-laden arenas of interaction.". . . Likewise cultural heritage, the sense of belonging to a cultural structure and history, is often cited as a source of emotional security and personal strength. . . . In these and other ways, cultural membership seems crucial to personal agency and development: when the individual is stripped of her cultural heritage, her development becomes stunted.[24]

Thus, it is the fact that the people of a particular culture have fostered others in a particular way that makes cultural membership valuable—and although in theory any one is as good as any other, in practice they will never all be identical and are not interchangeable. This means that the foundational good of cultural membership must refer to a given individual's membership in her *actual, historical, cultural community* and not merely to membership in any culture. (This rules out the possibility of this good being provided through forceful assimilation of particular groups or allowing them to be overwhelmed by the dominant culture in the society.)

Respect for oneself and respect from others are human needs because they are closely connected to a person's sense of dignity and worth. Judith Lichtenberg observes that respect is only achievable if (1) people can avoid shame, and (2) people can demonstrate their talents and value. She notes that "the need to avoid shame is basic and universal.

But what it takes to satisfy that need varies widely from time to time and place to place."[25] Certain goods are required in order to avoid being shamed or humiliated by one's neediness in front of others. Below a certain level of functioning people are unable to fulfill the expectations of others and effectively carry out their role-related duties, such as caring for children. A person's inability to do what is socially and ethically expected can lower her estimation of oneself, and damage the respect others have for her. It is important to be free from shame so as to avoid the pity of others and participate fully in the community. If a person lacks self-respect, then she may accept life conditions that are substandard, thus lowering her overall welfare further.

In addition, Lichtenberg points out that certain material goods perform the function of ability signaling. Certain goods tend be representative of levels of ability, such as expensive cars and suits for lawyers. If a lawyer looks poor, then people assume that he is a bad lawyer, because good lawyers usually make a lot of money and spend it on nice suits and cars. People use these types of consumption signs to gather quick information about others. The signs are not deliberately created by people, but emerge in society as norms. If a person wishes to convey the right message about his abilities, and thus take advantage of opportunities for bettering his circumstances, then he must have the right material goods to obtain the respect and attention of those people doing the evaluating. Thus in order to succeed and be valued in the wider community for one's abilities, first one must command the respect of others. The fulfillment of this need, socially speaking, is the springboard for achievement.

Since the foundational good of relationships with others will be treated extensively in Section II, I will move on to contrasting foundational goods with relative goods.

Relative Goods

Relative goods are things that correspond to preferences rather than needs. When something is classed as "good" in the relative sense, it is understood as directly related to desire-fulfillment, whereas foundational goods may be desired but need not be. Foundational goods are good for us as human beings regardless of whether or not we desire them. Indeed, as Galston points out, "practices that thwart our subjective preferences may nevertheless promote our welfare."[26]

Relative goods are considered good by the individuals who seek them, but those individuals are not subject to moral censure or asked for explanations should they give them up or change their minds about pursuing them. They are accurately described as benefits. Relative goods are the kinds of things that we are asked to give reasons for seeking, that is, they are not self-evidently worth seeking because they originate in each person's individual tastes, preferences and temperament.

Critics may well ask where happiness fits in to this scheme of foundational and relative goods. Happiness is a relative good since it is itself a heterogeneous concept. Certain foundational goods are clearly made up of diverse components, such as ways in which to ingest the required nutrients for survival. But these are merely diverse means to the same end, whereas happiness is, in effect, a heterogeneous *end*. It is doubtful that

even the subjective feeling of happiness is the same across individuals—never mind the concrete state of being that is made up by its various components.

The reason that happiness cannot be classed as a foundational good is that the distribution of desirable mental states is problematic for an analysis of justice. An effective analysis of justice (particularly economic justice) must be cast in terms of goods which are redistributable, because its goal is to paint a picture of what substantive equality would look like. Although subjective feelings of happiness may be part of a person's overall well-being, they are not the type of things which are amenable to redistribution, except indirectly, by being the result of other changes in welfare. Happiness properly belongs in a larger account of the good life of which welfare is only a part.

All this means is that happiness will not be included as one of the goods to be distributed in my analysis of justice. However, it also means that happiness is going to be a lower priority than all foundational goods, in the sense that it would be unjust to sacrifice the latter for the former.

SECTION II: JUSTICE AND PRIVATE LIFE

In this section, it will be argued that relationships and ground projects are foundational goods and so may be justifiably pursued. Building relationships and ground projects into the framework of foundational goods leaves room for these types of partial considerations to be weighed alongside more universal considerations such as respect, without contradiction. This is an attractive theoretical move because we want to include the attachments to people and projects that make life worth living in our moral framework, as well as acknowledge that these have a real connection to our most basic needs as human beings.

I will close this section with a further discussion of what our partial obligations definitely require of us, and how far partiality may justifiably extend on the basis of my argument. It seems to me that if a particular good has partiality built-in to it, then the partiality is justified, as long as it is a foundational good and not simply a disguise for selfishness.[27] The idea here is that we need to look at the relationships, lives, and needs of particular people in order to determine appropriate limits, but that partiality is not unlimited—it is justified by the other goods of which it is a central part. This means that any judgments about justice will make room for a limited entitlement to have and sustain special commitments to people and projects.

Relationships as Foundational Goods

Special relationships with others are at the same time both foundational goods and partial goods. We have already seen why they are necessarily partial in nature, namely, that these types of relationships are characterized by a special concern for the welfare of the other. A person has to demonstrate more concern for the people with whom she has

special relationships than she does for people at large, or else the relationships cease to exist. One cannot simply decide each day who to display special concern towards, and call this practice "having relationships." Rather, a person must institute an ongoing practice of demonstrating care and attention to a particular person's hopes, emotions and general welfare. Since it is impossible to sustain this kind of ongoing concern with everyone, it follows that such relationships are inherently partial to their participants.

Relationships are also a foundational good. Clearly they are irreducible to mental states, although mutual feelings do play a role. Acts of care and expressions of concern are concrete, as are the plans, time and activities shared by the participants. They are also both indivisible and non-aggregative, in that you either have a relationship with a person or you do not, and although relationships can change, varying their qualities does not necessarily make them into something else. In order to fully appreciate how fundamental they are for good lives, we need only try to imagine a life that contained absolutely no close relationships at all—if such a thing is even possible.

Moreover, partial relationships are also intrinsically valuable. Donaldson maintains that close relationships are "value-intrinsic," in the sense that the ends of family and friendship are logically unattainable without the existence of those particular institutions.[28] Imagine that some other arrangement was put in place to "do the job" of your family and friends? How would this work? Further, isn't it the point that we do not accrue "benefits" from family and friends that are susceptible to being delivered by some other source? Indeed, some state body might provide some material aspects of help and nurturance, but this would not be a substitute for relationships in any reasonable sense. This is because relationships are not merely delivery systems for help—they are intrinsically valuable personal connections with particular individuals. We care about these people and the relationships we have with them for their own sake, not for the sake of the benefits we receive from them. One's caring about the person and the relationship *is* the reason for it—no other, deeper reason can be given.[29] This illustrates that relationships are ultimate ends for us. This is also why they are such central sources of meaning in our lives.

The other line of argument which demonstrates why we need relationships concerns the social nature of the self. Marilyn Friedman observes that "in its identity, character, interests and preferences, [the self] is constituted by, and in the course of, relationships with particular others, including . . . relationships that locate it as a member of certain communities."[30] Who we are can only be really understood in terms of the people to whom we are related. We are someone's friend, someone's lover, someone's student, or her sister. Our projects, professions, leisure activities and beliefs are shaped by the people to whom we are special, and those who are special to us. We inform and transform the experiences and character of one another by being in relationships with them and caring about them. Thus, if the self is constituted at least in part by relationships, then we can see that they correspond to the human needs for individuality, identity, and belonging.

NOTES

[1] Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 14.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Thomas Donaldson, "Morally Privileged Relationships," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 24 (1990), p. 6.
[4] Ibid., p. 7.
[5] Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26 (1997), p. 196.
[6] Ibid., p. 189.
[7] Ibid., p. 197.
[8] John Kekes, "Morality and Impartiality," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1981), p. 298.
[9] John Cottingham, "Partiality, Favouritism and Morality," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1986) p. 365.
[10] Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 209.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," p. 198.
[13] Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), p. 382.
[14] Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality*, p. 10.
[15] Sam Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities," p. 193.
[16] Ibid., p. 194.
[17] Peter Singer, "Famine Affluence and Morality," pp. 591 - 592.
[18] Charles Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods," in A. Sen and B. Williams (eds)., *Utilitarianism and Beyond.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 135.
[19] Ibid., p. 140.
[20] William A. Galston, *Justice and the Human Good* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 52.
[21] Ibid., p. 56.
[22] Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 166.
[23] Ibid., pp. 164-165.
[24] Ibid., pp. 175-176, where he is quoting from J. Fishman, *The Sociology of Language* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1972), p. 4.
[25] Judith Lichtenberg, "Consuming Because Others Consume," in Crocker and Linden (eds.), *Ethics of Consumption* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) p. 163.
[26] William Galston, *Justice and the Human Good*, p. 56.
[27] I am not here denying that one's own good is worthy of partial concern. Rather, I am merely pointing out that I am not always justified in being partial to myself simply because I have some unsatisfied desires.
[28] Thomas Donaldson, "Morally Privileged Relationships," p. 11.
[29] Ibid., p. 9.
[30] Marilyn Friedman, "The Social Self and the Partiality Debates," in Claudia Card (ed.), *Feminist Ethics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), p. 64.