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YOU CAN'T CHOOSE YOUR FAMILY

Impartial Morality and Personal Obligations in *Alias*

Brendan Shea

J. J. Abrams's *Alias* tells the story of a spy named Sydney Bristow. Like many fictional spies, Sydney is a quick-thinking expert in disguise and physical combat who regularly risks life and limb in order to protect the innocent. Also, unlike some of her more cold-blooded fictional counterparts, Sydney tries to be honest and kindhearted and to treat others as they deserve to be treated. So, whereas a character like James Bond strives to avoid the emotional entanglements that come with close personal relationships, Sydney works hard to maintain close relationships with family and friends. She strives, in other words, to be both a good spy and a good person; her choices and actions model many of those qualities that we think are central to living a *moral* (or *ethical*) life.

While Sydney's relationships are valuable to her, they also complicate her efforts to live the moral life. Friends, relatives, and romantic partners compete with the U.S. government for Sydney's time and energy, and they provide prime targets for enemies to threaten, seduce, or otherwise make use of. When conflicts arise between her personal and professional life, Sydney is forced to balance two seemingly incommensurable demands of morality: the first, that she fulfill her duty (as a spy, superhero, and all-around good person) to do what is best for people *in general;* the second, that she fulfill her duty (as a daughter, friend, or romantic partner) to do what is best for *particular* people.

Sydney's case is complicated by various factors (e.g., by the fact that many of her friends and family are spies), and this problem is a universal one. Her solution should thus be of real interest to us. In this chapter I will examine how Sydney and the other characters in *Alias* fare in their attempts to meet these two sets of obligations, and I will consider what lessons this might have for the rest of us.

Morality and Impartiality

While it is difficult to say exactly what exactly *morality* is, viewers of *Alias* should

have few problems distinguishing characters who (generally) behave morally from those who (generally) do not. So, whereas moral characters like Sydney and Vaughn regularly risk their lives to save others, immoral characters like Sloane and Irina steal, lie, and kill in order to advance their own selfish agendas. Perhaps the most fundamental difference between moral characters and immoral characters concerns the role that *other people* play in their decision making. An immoral character like Sloane treats other people as *tools* that can be used to get what he wants—money, power, immortality, and so on. A moral character like Sydney, on the other hand, recognizes that other people have their own interests and goals (e.g., not being killed) and that it would unfair of her to act as though her well-being is any more important than theirs is.

According to many moral thinkers, it is just this sort of "equal" or "impartial" treatment of others that is at the heart of moral behavior. In order to act *impartially*, one must refrain from showing favoritism (or "partiality") based on morally irrelevant characteristics. So, for example, such views are opposed to *ethical egoism*, which is the theory that every person ought to do whatever is in his or her own best interest.[1]

One famous example of an impartial moral principle is the "Great Commandment" of the Gospels, which commands the reader to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:12). Impartial moral principles have also been defended by various philosophers. For example, one version of Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) *categorical imperative* directs the reader to "so act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."[2] In order to treat people as *ends* one must, according to Kant, refrain from doing bad things to them merely to advance one's own agenda, however worthwhile that agenda might seem. Kant claims that this requirement means that we cannot kill, lie to, or harm innocent people. The principle is *impartial* insofar as it requires that we consider other people as our *moral equals* and constrain our behavior accordingly.

Also, John Stuart Mill's (1806–1873) *principle of utility* states that a moral action is one that leads to "not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether."[3] The principle is impartial because everyone's happiness counts for exactly the *same;* one is not allowed to put a higher value on *particular* people's happiness. So, for example, this principle requires that a person be willing to sacrifice his or her *own* life if this is the only way to save *two lives*.

John Rawls (1921–2002) argues that a given principle is *just* if and only if everyone would agree to it under a so-called veil of ignorance. When people are under this veil, they are ignorant of all the things about themselves that might distort their moral judgment: for example, their gender, age, race, religious and political beliefs, place in society, and physical and intellectual abilities. This ensures that impartial principles will be chosen, since all the people who are choosing are ignorant of anything that might make it possible for them to be

partial.[4]

If acting morally requires us to act impartially, then it is easy to explain why Sydney is such a morally exemplary person. As a spy, Sydney makes considerable sacrifices in order to ensure the safety and happiness of others. Along with the obvious risks to her life, Sydney is forced to put off school, to break off relationships, and to refrain from doing a great number of things she would probably have enjoyed more than being a spy. This type of selfless behavior shows that that Sydney values the well-being of other people and does not unduly privilege her own wants and desires.

Three Moral Dilemmas

While the above theories do a good job of explaining our duties toward people in general (e.g., don't kill innocent people, give money to charity, etc.), they have little to say about the *special* obligations we have to our friends, family, and coworkers. By *special obligations*, I mean those obligations that we have toward friends and family that are different than (and perhaps stronger than) the duties we have to everyone else. So, for example, we ought (morally) to spend time with these people, to listen to their problems, and to do everything we can to ensure their safety and well-being. Conflicts between impartial moral duties and special obligations to loved ones occur quite frequently in *Alias*, and the way that the characters respond to them can reveal a great deal about who they really are. In this section we will take a brief look at three such dilemmas. In the next section we will consider some possible responses to such dilemmas.

The first type of dilemma occurs when one must choose between saving the life of a loved one and saving the lives of a greater number of innocent strangers. Such scenarios are a regular staple of both moral philosophy and spy shows, and *Alias* is no exception. Sydney encounters such a dilemma, for example, in the final episode of season 1 ("Almost Thirty Years"). She has, after considerable effort, managed to recover a journal page from a long-dead man named Rambaldi. She knows that the page contains directions for using a mysterious device that she suspects (correctly) might be very dangerous if it were to be acquired by the wrong people. In fact, the page turns out to contain directions for how to use a weapon (the "circumference") that can cause people to become violently insane. Sydney's problem is that her close friend Will has been kidnapped and the kidnappers have demanded the journal page as the price for his return. Given Sydney's suspicions about the nature of the device, what should she do? Should she save her friend by handing over the page, or should she protect the public at large by refusing to hand it over? The problem, it seems, is that her impartial moral duty ("don't let bad people get weapons of mass destruction") conflicts with her more specific duty to aid her friend.

For those of us who are not spies, dilemmas of the first type are (thankfully) rare. We are, however, often faced with moral dilemmas of a different type. In

these scenarios we are asked to decide how much of our time and energy should be devoted to helping people *in general* and how much should be devoted to helping the *particular people* to whom we are closest. The characters in *Alias*, many of whom work in intelligence, are often faced with this type of dilemma. Jack, for instance, has long been forced to balance being a father to Sydney with his job as a spy, while Sydney is forced to balance her own job as a spy with her personal life. Sydney and Jack are, in a wide variety of ways, constantly being forced to decide between work and family. They must choose between honoring promises to the CIA and honoring promises to friends, between spending time on the job and spending time at home, and between telling the truth about their jobs to those close to them (and perhaps endangering their lives) and lying about what is perhaps the most important part of their lives. The question here is, How much time, money, and energy ought one devote to helping loved ones, and how much should be devoted to helping strangers?

The final dilemma concerns the morality of taking *revenge* against those who have harmed our loved ones. By *revenge*, I mean simply the act of harming someone *because that person harmed someone close to you*. This may involve taking direct action against the person, or it may simply involve making sure that the person's crimes are exposed to the proper authorities. Taking revenge in this sense does not necessarily require that one do something immoral. Sydney's actions in bringing down SD6, for example, are acts of revenge in the sense that is meant here. The question here is not whether it is morally *okay* for Sydney to try and bring SD6 down (since it clearly is), but whether Danny's death *obligates* Sydney to do so.

Even with this caveat in mind, it may seem odd to characterize the desire to seek revenge as a *moral* motivation. After all, the desire to seek "revenge" against those who have done you wrong is commonly contrasted with the desire to bring those people to "justice." For our purposes here, however, I think that this distinction can be safely ignored. We are concerned only with those cases in which the person being targeted for revenge actually did the crime and where the punishment proposed fits the crime. It seems safe to say that most of us, for instance, can sympathize with Sydney's anger over Sloane's murder of her fiancé or with Jack's anger over Irina's treatment of Sydney. In fact, it seems plausible that many of us would think *less* of Sydney and Jack if they were not the type of people who take such things personally—that is, if they were not the type of people who feel specially obligated to make sure Sloane and Irina do not "get away with their crimes." Approving of this sort of revenge does not, of course, require that one approve of *every* act of revenge. Sloane's murder of Dixon's wife, for instance, might be an act of vengeance, but it is clearly immoral.

What to Do?

The characters of *Alias* respond to the three dilemmas outlined in the previous

section in a variety of different ways, and these differences reveal a great deal about their moral decision-making process. In this section I will take a closer look at these responses and consider in more detail what might be the morally *correct* way of responding. I will suggest that there are, in general, three ways that the characters of *Alias* respond to these dilemmas. Two of these ways are "extreme" views, according to which we don't really have the moral obligations we thought we did. I will argue that these views are mistaken and that we ought to instead adopt the "moderate" view exemplified by Sydney's actions.

NO SPECIAL TREATMENT?

The first, and perhaps simplest, way of resolving these moral dilemmas is to simply *ignore* the fact that the situation involves any particular people and to simply act as if everyone involved were a complete stranger. According to this view, for instance, the fact that Sydney and Jack are father and daughter is *morally* irrelevant to the types of duties they owe to one another. So if Jack would normally choose to sacrifice one innocent agent's life to save the lives of two other innocent agents, he should do so even if the one agent in question is Sydney. This doesn't that mean Jack isn't obligated to try to save Sydney if she is captured, or vice versa; however, it does mean he has no *greater* obligation to save Sidney than he would to save any other of his fellow agents. Similarly, while this view is compatible with various people (e.g., Sydney and Vaughn) being in love, it says that one's *moral* duties to a loved one are just same the same as they are to anyone else.

In *Alias* something like this viewpoint is occasionally put forward by certain "higher-ups" in the CIA (such as Devlin), who seem willing to sacrifice their agents' lives in any case where their analysis suggests this is the least "risky" action for the CIA to take. This is not to say that they throw their agents' lives away needlessly; rather, it is simply that they don't feel any *more* of an obligation to protect their agents than they do to protect other innocent people.

The best example of the first response, however, is probably provided by Jack's treatment of Sydney. Jack was, by his own account, a mediocre father who nearly always chose his work at the CIA over spending time with Sydney. According to the view being considered here, Jack's behavior was perfectly moral. After all, we have every reason to think that Jack was *good* at his job; that is, the information he was able to provide the CIA was instrumental in protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens. So, for each family dinner or school function of Sydney's that Jack missed, he was doing work that directly helped save the lives of many others. The problem is that, while all of this may be true, there remains the sense that Jack *did not* fulfill his moral obligations to Sydney.

One (in)famous philosophical defender of this view is William Godwin (1756–1836). He considers the hypothetical choice between saving the life of a (socially insignificant but beloved) parent or sibling and saving the life of an archbishop who is known for doing good works. Godwin argues that in such cases "the life

ought to be preserved which will be most conducive to the general good," even if this other life happens to be oneself or one's close relations; so we ought to save the archbishop. This, according to Godwin, is what *justice* (i.e., impartiality) demands; if we fail to save the archbishop, we are being unjust to all of the (many) people who will suffer as the result of his death. We have unduly privileged the people that *we* love and have thus failed to treat others as their moral equals.[5]

While few contemporary philosophers endorse Godwin's radical conclusion, many have suggested that the moral obligations we have toward far-distant strangers are in fact quite similar to the obligations we have toward those we know and love. Peter Singer, for instance, has argued that morality requires that we give nearly all of our disposable income to poverty relief. This is because we have every reason to expect that the money will do *far more* good when used to purchase food or medicine for the truly needy than when used to purchase luxuries for our loved ones or ourselves. On Singer's view, it is not so much that we overestimate the obligations we have to our family and friends as that we underestimate our obligations to everyone else. So, insofar as we agree it would be morally wrong to let a sibling die of starvation when we could afford to buy him or her food, we ought also to agree that is morally wrong to spend money on luxuries when this money could be used to save strangers from starvation. If Singer is right about this, then it would seem to imply that *any* money spent on luxuries (e.g., buying a diamond engagement right, going out for a fancy dinner, etc.) is immoral.[6]

This view of our moral obligations is, as both Godwin and Singer seem to recognize, radically at odds with the way that most people think about these things. And while a view's unpopularity is hardly evidence that it is false, there do seem to be some legitimate reasons for concern. After all, the decision makers at the CIA who are *too* willing to sacrifice agents' lives might strike one as cold and inhuman; similarly, there seems to be a genuine sense in which Jack's failures as a father *cannot* be excused by noting all of the good things he was able to do while ignoring his young daughter. The question is whether we can find a way to reconcile these concerns with an impartial view of morality.

NO IMPARTIAL MORALITY?

While the first approach counsels that personal relationships have no place in moral thought, the second approach advises that such relationships are in fact the *only* things of moral relevance in the types of dilemmas we are discussing here. This approach holds that we *do* have obligations to our nearest and dearest and that the existence of these obligations means that morality is not really impartial. More specifically, this approach says that we ought to do *everything we possibly can* for our nearest and dearest, regardless of the effect these actions might have on other people. This view says that one should always choose to save a loved one, regardless of the cost to others; that it is always

okay to choose family over work; and that there are no limits to the revenge that might be exacted on behalf of a loved one who has been harmed.

For a simple example of how this approach might work in practice, consider the case of a father trying to determine what help he ought to give to a daughter in need of a heart transplant. The first view would say that the father has no *special* obligation to make sure she gets the medical treatment she needs, though he may have a general moral requirement to care for sick people (especially those he is well placed to help). The second view says, by contrast, that the father can (and perhaps should) do everything in his power to make his sure his daughter gets the treatment she needs. If this means holding the physician at gunpoint or killing innocent people to harvest their hearts, so be it. The only thing of importance, in this view, is the father's obligation to help his daughter.

When Nadia becomes ill in the final season of *Alias*, Sloane finds himself in a situation similar to that of the hypothetical father. His actions in this case, moreover, serve as a good example of what the second approach advises. Representatives of an evil organization (Prophet Five) promise Sloane that they can cure Nadia; however, they tell him that they will do so only if Sloane agrees to serve as a double agent. Sloane (reluctantly) agrees to do so, even though he knows that his actions as a double agent might lead to the deaths of innocent people, including Jack or Sydney. Sloane's reasoning seems to be that his duty to save Nadia outweighs any obligation he may have to other people.

A second example of the second view is provided by Sloane's wife, Emily. During the second season episode "Truth Takes Time," Emily learns that Sloane is still involved with various illegal activities (and is still lying about them to her). Based on this knowledge, she goes to Sydney and tells her that she is willing to help the CIA catch Sloane (though only if the CIA doesn't seek the death penalty). From an impartial point of view, turning in Sloane would obviously be the right thing for Emily to do, even though Sloane swears to her he will give up his life of crime. Emily knows, after all, that Sloane has lied to her in the past and that he has made a habit of killing innocent people. In the end, however, Emily feels guilt over turning in her husband to the CIA and chooses to warn Sloane of the CIA's trap for him. She, like Sloane, seems to feel that her duty to stand by her husband trumps her obligation to protect the people who might be harmed by Sloane's continuing his evil ways.

Few philosophers explicitly endorse the view that one is morally permitted to do whatever one likes for the sake of loved ones. However, some have argued that we ought to reject the ideal of an impartial morality for precisely the sorts of reasons that Sloane and Emily do so—that is, because obeying the demands of such a morality would require that we give up everything that makes life worth living.

Bernard Williams (1929–2003), for instance, has argued that being truly impartial is incompatible with leading a meaningful life. According to Williams, a person's life is meaningful only if he or she has one or more *ground projects* that

are "closely related to his [or her] existence and which to a significant degree give meaning to his [or her] life." For Emily, such a project might be her life with Sloane; for Sloane, such projects might involve Nadia's well-being and the pursuit of the Rambaldi artifacts. The problem arises, according to Williams, when one realizes that obeying an impartial morality might require that you give up any hope of completing your ground projects—for example, it might require that you turn your husband in to the police or let your daughter die when you could save her. Williams argues that it is completely unrealistic to expect humans to behave in this way. After all, if people's ground projects are what give their lives substance, then demanding that they give up on these projects is quite similar to demanding that they commit suicide.[7]

Williams concludes from the above considerations that the impartial view of morality is false:

> One reaches the necessity that such things as deep attachments to other persons will express themselves in the world in ways which cannot at the same time embody the impartial view, and that they also run the risk of offending against it. They run that risk if they exist at all; yet unless such things exist there will not be enough substance or conviction in a man's life to compel his allegiance to life itself. . . . Life has to have substance if anything is to have sense, including adherence to the impartial system; but if it has substance, then it cannot grant supreme importance to the impartial system, and that system's hold on it will be, at the limit, insecure.[8]

While Williams's view does not entail that Emily's and Sloane's actions are morally right, it suggests that they are not quite morally wrong either. Instead, it might be thought that such extreme cases inhabit a sort of gray area about which it is impossible for us to pass moral judgment at all.

Insofar as this view allows for a more nuanced judgment of characters like Emily, it clearly gets something right. The problem, if there is one, lies in the fact that it leaves so little room for any moral judgment. There is, after all, a fairly clear sense that Emily and Sloane *know* that they are doing the wrong things but choose to do them anyway. Their choices to act in the way that they do might be understandable, especially given their circumstances; however, this does not mean that what they are doing is morally okay.[9]

SYDNEY'S MODERATE SOLUTION

There are good reasons to be suspicious of both the preceding views. After all, it seems intuitively clear that Jack *ought* to have been a better father to Sydney and that Sloane *ought* to have rejected Prophet Five's deal. These intuitions suggest there is *some* special obligation to take special care of one's "nearest and dearest" but this does not give us license to do just anything on their behalf.

Of all the *Alias* characters, Sydney provides the best example of this moderate

view. She neither ignores her special obligations to those close to her nor ignores her obligations to everyone else. So, for example, consider Sydney's actions when Will's kidnappers demand that that she trade a Rambaldi page for his release. Sydney is aware that this page contains the plan for building and using a dangerous device. She is also aware, however, that considerable time and effort will be needed to effectively utilize the device and that it may be possible for her to do other things to prevent the device from being used. It is thus unclear how *much* danger there really is in giving the plan to this organization. In the end, Sydney decides to have Jack trade the page for Will but to simultaneously attempt to destroy the organization's lab (which will prevent or delay their attempts to use the device). Sydney's choice here is notably distinct from what either extreme view would have dictated. The first view would suggest that Sydney refuse to make the trade at all, on the grounds that Will's life could not possibly be worth the risk; the second solution would urge that Sydney make the trade as offered (and not attempt to blow up the lab), on the grounds that doing anything else might put Will in unnecessary danger.

One can easily find other examples of Sydney doing this sort of balancing act. So, for example, Sydney makes regular efforts to spend time with family and friends, even though she could undoubtedly find more "spy work" to do. She has dinner with her father, goes on dates with Vaughn, and spends holidays with her friends. She also regularly disobeys her superiors in order to save the lives or friends or family and proves willing to seek revenge against those who hurt them. However, she is not willing to do just anything for her loved ones. She is, for example, willing to turn her father in to the FBI when she suspects that he may have once worked for the KGB, and she is willing seek out and fight her mother in order to prevent the destruction of New York and London.

Sydney's "moderate" view is, in many ways, both intuitive and compelling. The philosophical difficulty for this view, however, is to explain *why* we have special obligations to certain people at all, if morality really requires that we be impartial. This difficulty is notably unique to the third view. The first view evades the difficulty by claiming that there are no special obligations, while the second view evades it by claiming that morality does not really require that we be impartial.

One way of explaining why we have special obligations to loved ones is to note the moral importance of acting *quickly* and without hesitation or fear. Impartial morality, after all, requires that we all do our best to help and protect others when we can. The best way of helping and protecting others, however, is surely not to spend all of our time exhaustively cataloging everyone's problems and to act only when we are sure that we have chosen the best possible course of action. If we did this, nothing would ever get done and we would end up helping no one. In the world of *Alias*, for instance, such a strategy would ensure that no bomb would ever be defused and that no bad guy would ever be caught. It is far better to simply *assume* that loved ones who are in danger ought to be

rescued, that parents ought to spend time with their children, and that evildoers ought to be brought to justice. This is because such actions are, in the vast majority of cases, to the benefit of everyone involved. This solution, which is defended by Peter Railton, might also explain why it is a morally good thing for us to think of our loved ones as being *special* or *different* from other people. This sort of love can, after all, be a powerful motivator to quick, decisive action in defense of others. According to Railton, the best (most moral) types of people are those, like Sydney, for whom these types of selfless behavior are almost "second nature."[10]

If Railton is correct, then Sydney's choice to trade the Rambaldi page to save Will's life is a moral one even if it (in the end) leads to a larger number of causalities. This holds not because Will's life is more valuable than other people's lives but because of Sydney's *relationship* to Will. Sydney has worked hard to be *the sort of person* whom family and friends can count on for aid, comfort, and protection. This, according to Railton, is exactly what impartiality requires of her. One cannot be this sort of person, however, and also be the sort of person who is continuously trying to figure out how much the life of a loved one is "worth" when compared to the lives of others. This does not mean, of course, that one should simply ignore the wellbeing of strangers. Instead, one ought to try (as Sydney does) to help both one's loved ones and everyone else.

A slightly different explanation of the importance of special obligations is suggested by Frank Jackson, who emphasizes the importance of a sort of a moral "division of labor." Jackson begins by noting that it would be horribly inefficient to require that *everyone* simultaneously help and protect *everyone else*. So, for example, it is plausible that we have an impartial moral duty to see to it that the children in our community have food, shelter, and education. However, the fact that we have such an obligation does not mean that each one of us should offer food or housing to every child we happen to meet. Instead, most societies have found that it works better to assign responsibility for individual children to a relatively small number of people (e.g., parents, teachers, social workers, etc.). Ideally, this sort of system will meet the needs of all children, by making sure each child has an appropriate number of caretakers who will look out for his or her interests.[11]

Jackson argues that this sort of "sector system," which assigns specific moral duties to specific people, works best in particular types of situations. In particular, he argues that it works best in scenarios that

- require an in-depth knowledge of the people that one is trying to help,
- need considerable long-term planning,
- depend upon a level of trust between the various people involved,
- are best resolved by a small number of people, and
- can be done most effectively by people who are emotionally invested in the outcome.

The best examples of these situations involve the sorts of moral duties that we owe to our loved ones—for example, to console them when they are sad, to talk through difficult choices with them, to buy them appropriate birthday gifts, and so on. These sorts of duties simply cannot be done by a complete stranger. Raising a child well, for instance, requires the efforts of a person (or people) who knows a lot about that particular child's needs and abilities and who is willing to invest a good deal of physical and emotional resources. Moreover, there would be no great benefit to the child in having *too* many people take this sort of interest in his or her life; instead, these sorts of duties can best accomplished by a relatively small number of people (parents, relatives, etc.).

In Jackson's view, then, Sydney is doing just as she ought to do in treating her loved ones in a different way (and better) than she treats strangers off the street. Sydney's eventual choice to leave the spy life behind and concentrate on raising her child with Vaughn, for example, does not mean she is "letting the country down" or unjustifiably favoring her child. Sydney, unlike her father, Jack, has simply realized that the she *does* have special obligations to her child and that these obligations cannot *always* be trumped by the need to save the world from the latest impeding disaster.

A Model of Moral Behavior

The moral dilemmas of *Alias* characters are, in certain ways, wildly different from the dilemmas that we encounter in our daily lives. Most of us will never be asked to conceal government secrets from loved ones, to seek revenge against spies who have murdered our fiancé, or be asked to fight our parents to prevent genocide. In other ways, however, the dilemmas faced by these characters should be quite familiar to us. Part of living a moral life involves figuring out how one can simultaneously respect the idea that everyone deserves *equal* treatment and the idea that we have special obligations to the *particular* people with whom we are closest. In this respect, as in so many others, Sydney provides a model of moral behavior.

Notes

1. Most of the historically important philosophical and religious writings on ethics defend impartial moral principles, though Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994) contains suggestions of ethical egoism. The best-known defenses of ethical egoism in popular culture are probably the works of Ayn Rand. See her *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964).

2. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38.

3. John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131–204, quote on 142.

4. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

5. William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1798), 127–30.

6. Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229–43.

7. Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality," in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.

8. Ibid., 18.

9. See Marilyn Friedman, "The Practice of Partiality," *Ethics* 101 (1991): 818–35; James Rachels, "Morality, Parents, and Children," in *Can Ethics Provide Answers? And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 1997), 213–34. They both provide detailed critiques of the sort of extreme partialism described here.

10. Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13 (1984): 134–71.

11. Frank Jackson, "Decision-Theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection," *Ethics* 101 (1991): 461–82.