

Morality and Personal Relationships

Throughout this book, I made frequent reference to a wide range of moral issues: honesty, jealousy, sexual fidelity, commitment, paternalism, caring, etc. This suggests there is an intricate connection between morality and personal relationships. There is. Of course personal relationships do not always promote moral values, nor do people find all relationships salutary. Some friendships, marriages, and kin relationships are anything but healthy or valuable. We all know (and perhaps are in) some relationships which hinder personal growth, undermine moral values, and diminish both parties' happiness -- in short, relationships which systematically undermine the values they should promote.

Arguably such relationships are not close in any robust sense of the term. Nonetheless, I think many of them are personal. They are personal inasmuch as each person loves the other as a specific, unique individual. However, they are not close inasmuch as the parties cannot or will not take the interests of the others as their own. I suspect many of these marginal relationships fail because they are founded on a rigid love. Rigid love, if you may recall, is tied to a particular organism, not to that particular person with specific, embodied characteristics. Since this form of love is indifferent to the beloved's particular characteristics, the lover is likely less sensitive to the beloved's interests, needs, and desires.

The presence of detrimental relationships, however, does not undermine the claim that personal relationships are intricately connected with morality. Throughout the book I have offered numerous examples which indicate the pervasiveness and breadth of this connection. Here I want to bring these disparate suggestions together to defend an Aristotelian-type two-pronged thesis: that a) close personal relationships are likely to be formed and persist only among morally

good people, and that b) close personal relationships are prerequisites for the development of morally good people.

Many people, I suspect, will think these claims are mistaken. Some will object to them on empirical grounds: they will claim that some corrupt people have close personal relationships, while some good people do not. Although I think this occurs far less often than the objectors might think, neither Aristotle's nor my account asserts that it is impossible for immoral people to be close friends -- especially if the term "immoral" is construed weakly enough. Nor need either account claim it is impossible for those without close relationships to be morally good. What both accounts do suggest is that people who are moral are considerably more likely to have close personal relationships, and that the personal relationships of immoral people are in jeopardy.

Some philosophers reject my thesis on purely theoretical grounds. On their view, not only are morality and personal relationships not intricately connected, they are often diametrically opposed. It is not difficult to see why. Morality, as typically conceived, requires impartiality. The principle of impartiality (or the equal consideration of interests) specifies that we must treat all humans (creatures?) alike unless there is some general and morally relevant difference between them which justifies a difference in treatment. This principle is central to traditional ethical theory. According to J.L. Mackie, it is "in some sense beyond dispute" (1977: 83). The principle of impartiality does permit treating different people differently, but any difference in treatment must be justified by general features of the circumstances, so that others in like circumstances should act similarly (Singer 1971; Frankena 1973; Hare 1963). Specifically, impartiality forbids any deviation in one's moral duties because of one's "variable inclinations" (Gewirth 1978: 24) or "generic differences between persons" (Mackie 1977: 97). Put differently, "the class of persons alleged to be an exception to the rule cannot be a unit class" (Singer 1971: 87). Thus, a teacher should give equal grades to students who perform equally; unequal grades are justified only if there is some general and relevant reason which justifies that difference. For example, it is legitimate to give a better grade to a student who does superior work; it is illegitimate to give her a better grade because she is pretty, wears pink, or is named "Molly."

On the other hand, personal relationships are partial to the core: the subject of attention is *always* "a unit class" -- "... its particular focus [is] the unique concatenation of wants, desires, identify, history, and so on,

o a particular person" (Friedman 1993: 190-1). That is why personal relationships (which have partiality at their core) clash with morality, typically conceived (which has impartiality at its core). How, if at all, can this conflict be resolved? 1) Is there some way to show that the conflict is more apparent than real? 2) If not, does morality supersede the demands of personal relationships? 3) Or, do the demands of personal relationships supersede those of morality? If not, 4) can we have an adequate morality sans the principle of impartiality? (Rachels 1988) I shall briefly canvass each of these responses.

THREE RESPONSES

The conflict is only apparent

A common -- and once the standard -- move is to claim that morality and personal relationships do not really conflict. Those who embrace this view claim the partiality of personal relationships is explained and justified by impartial moral principles. Those who take this tack point out that the principle of equal consideration of interests is not a substantive moral principle: it does not specify exactly how anyone is to be treated. As a formal principle it requires only that we treat people the same unless there is some general and relevant reason which justifies a difference in treatment.

Those who embrace this view further claim that the general and relevant reason why I should treat Eva (my wife) better than I treat Phyllis (a stranger) is simply that she is my wife. That is, I should treat my wife -- whoever she turns out to be -- better than I treat strangers. Thus, were Phyllis my wife and Eva a stranger, then I should treat Phyllis better than I treat Eva. I should also treat my friends, children, and kin better than I treat strangers. Likewise you should treat your friends, children, and kin better than you treat strangers -- including strangers who happen to be my intimates. The moral rule which justifies partiality toward intimates is itself impartial; it does not make any reference to specific individuals. The rule impersonally allows (requires?) everyone to treat intimates better than they treat strangers. Consequently, the demands of morality and of personal relationships do not conflict, appearances to the contrary.

Is this a satisfactory resolution? "Being an intimate" **is** a general

characteristic; it does not make reference to any specific individual. But not all general characteristics are morally relevant. After all, a racist's principles are general. She claims all white people should be treated better than all non-white people. "It would even apply to me," she might say, "if I were non-white. The fact that I happen to be white does not show the principle is unacceptable." The problem, of course, is that although skin color is undoubtedly a general characteristic, it is not morally relevant (Wasserstrom 1971). Skin color is a biological characteristic unrelated to personal characteristics (e.g., character) which are morally relevant. It is difficult to even imagine a plausible reason one could give for thinking skin color is morally relevant.

On the other hand, it is easy to see why someone might think intimacy is morally relevant. "Being an intimate" appears to be not only a general characteristic, but also morally relevant. Intimate relationships generally promote honesty, caring, loyalty, self-knowledge, patience, empathy -- significant values by anyone's lights. Indeed, intimate relationships -- which are partial to the core -- may be uniquely able to promote these values. Hence, so the argument goes, partiality toward intimates is morally legitimate; after all, it is justified by impartial moral principles. The apparent conflict evaporates.

On this view, close personal relationships are akin to the relationships between professionals and their clients. *My* doctor should pay special attention to my medical needs and *your* doctor should pay special attention to yours. Partiality toward patients is the best way for each of us to receive the best medical care. If each doctor tried to care equally for the needs of all people, then likely none of us would receive adequate care. That is why we not only permit, but expect, physicians to be partial. Likewise, close personal relationships are the best way to promote important values. That is why we not only permit, but expect, intimates to be partial toward each another.

There is considerable insight in this maneuver; but it is inadequate as it stands. Many people would be uncomfortable thinking intimacy is, as this view implies, only derivatively valuable. Moreover, even if this maneuver could resolve the apparent tension between morality and self-interest, a parallel problem emerges when thinking about how we should treat specific intimates. The previous arguments explain that, since intimacy is a general and morally relevant characteristic, it is

legitimate to treat intimates better than we treat strangers, . But, that explanation implies that we should treat all intimates the same unless there is some general and relevant reason that justifies our treating them differently. Yet, most of us assume it is legitimate to treat different friends (and different kin) differently. However, there is no feasible way to provide impartial (i.e., general and relevant) reasons which would justify *these* differences in treatment.

Morality trumps personal interests

Those who embrace the second option likewise think a) moral principles must be impartial, and that b) impartial moral principles can justify some partiality toward intimates. That is, they think we have special duties to family and friends; duties which justify our treating them preferentially. However, unlike proponents of the previous view, they think morality and personal relationships do sometimes conflict -- and that when they do, the demands of morality are more compelling. Since close relationships are derivatively justified, when the demands of personal relationships conflict with the impartial moral principles which justify them, then the demands of morality are always more weighty. "[U]niversal love is a higher ideal than family loyalty, and ... the obligation within families can be properly understood only as particular instances of obligations to all mankind" (Rachels 1988: 46).

What this means in concrete terms is that we are not morally justified in treating intimates as preferentially as most of us are wont to do. Impartial moral principles likely justify parents' giving preferential care to their children, much like they justify people in institutional roles (policeofficers, judges, doctors, or lifeguards) treating people under their care preferentially. That is the best system for giving children maximal care and preparing them for life as adults. But, Rachels argues, we cannot justifiably give so much preferential care that we ignore the needs of other less well-off children.

For instance, although doctors should give preferential care to their patients, they are not justified in ignoring a person bleeding by the side of the road. Likewise, we cannot heap trivial benefits on our children or friends, while completely ignoring the needs of strangers. Partial personal relationships of some stripe are extremely valuable -- and thus justified by impartial moral principles. However,

close relationships which are morally justified cannot be *fundamentally* partial; their partiality is justified derivatively. Hence, the scope for legitimate impartiality is limited.

This view will likely strike most readers as wrong. In unqualified form I think it is wrong. Wrong, but not nonsense. It includes significant insights we should not ignore. Impartiality is vital to our understanding of morality,

"something deeply important, that we should be reluctant to give up. It is useful, for example, in explaining why egoism, racism, and sexism are morally odious, and if we abandon this conception we lose our most natural and persuasive means of combatting these doctrines."(Rachels 1988: 48)

Moreover, although it is appealing to be able to lavish attention on those for whom we care, such attention seems at least tacky and probably cosmically unfair given that other people, through no fault of their own, are so poorly off. These other people's lives could be improved if we would spread our attention beyond our close friends and family. For instance, it seems unfair that Sarah can legitimately buy her child an expensive toy or treat her husband to an exorbitant gourmet meal, while people living next door starve. Luck plays an inordinately large role in determining people's lot in life, and morality should attempt to diminish, if not eradicate, these undesirable effects of morally irrelevant luck. That, most assuredly, is a significant insight of the impartialist view.

However, we should not wholeheartedly embrace impartialism. In its unqualified form this view does not merely indicate that we cannot have the depth and range of personal relationships we might want, it arguable entails that we cannot have close personal relationships at all. Here's why. Personal relationships are partial to the core: they are *always* focused on one single person – that is why we consider them so valuable. Rachels's view, however, rejects fundamentally partial relationships. His view suggests parents should care for children -- and that we should act kindly toward our friends and spouses -- not because we love them, but because morality demands it.

If that *is* a consequence of his view, then his view is untenable. It would undermine what is most precious about personal relationships, namely, that intimates care for one another and want to spend time with each other because of who they are, because of their specific personality traits. Knowing we are loved for who we are will, among other things, heighten our self-esteem. It will also increase the opportunities for personal and moral growth. If, however, others befriend us simply

because morality requires it, then we lose these benefits of close personal relationships.

Perhaps, though, there is a way to salvage both an impartial morality *and* genuinely partial personal relationships. Doing so, though, requires showing how impartial moral principles might justify personal relationships, even though the motives for acting within the relationships would be fully partial. I think we can show this, and thereby preserve -- albeit in somewhat attenuated form -- the best of impartialism and personal relationships. But a full description and defense of that view must be delayed until I canvass the third option.

Non-moral values occasionally trump moral requirements

Several prominent philosophers, most notably Thomas Nagel (1979; 1986), Michael Stocker (1990), Bernard Williams, (1981) and Susan Wolfe (1982; 1986) have argued not only that impartial moral theories are incompatible with the partiality of personal relationships, but also that non-moral concerns sometimes (frequently? always?) trump moral concerns.

Though the argument each offers for these views differs, each concludes there are two radically different perspectives from which a person can determine how she should behave. She could determine how any rational agent should act, or she should determine how she -- with her particular interests and relationships -- should act. These philosophers claim the second perspective is often the most compelling: that close relationships and personal projects often take precedence over the demands of an impartial morality.

Williams offers the following case to illustrate his point. Suppose two people are drowning and a rescuer can save only one of them. It so happens that one is the rescuer's wife. Should the rescuer be impartial between these potential victims and decide whom to save by some impartial means, for example, flipping a coin? No. He should straightforwardly save his wife. That choice, Williams claims, requires no further justification.

Williams point, I take it, is not that the impartialist is unable to provide the right prescription in this case (although in some cases Williams thinks the impartialist's prescriptions will be incorrect). Rather, he claims, the impartialist will give the wrong reasons even if she gives the right answers.

[T]he consideration that it was his wife is certainly, for instance, an explanation which should silence comment. But something more ambitious than this is usually intended [in someone's saying that he was justified in his action], essentially involving the idea that moral principle can legitimate his preference, yielding the conclusion that in situations of this kind it is at least all right (morally permissible) to save one's wife....But this construction provides the agent with one question too many: it might have been hoped by some (for instance, 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)

Williams claims that when close personal relationships are at stake, it is inappropriate to guide (or think we should guide) our actions by impartial moral standards. Our personal projects, including our commitments to friends and family, will occasionally trump moral standards. Without such relationships and projects, Williams asserts, "there will not be enough substance or conviction in a man's life to compel allegiance to life itself." (18) Put differently, if life is to be meaningful, we cannot guide our lives by principles which subvert close relationships or personal projects. And that, he asserts, is exactly what impartial moral principles do.

Certainly Williams's view strikes a responsive chord in most of us: we sometimes think personal interests should take precedence over the needs of strangers. Yet, we can also see the intellectual and moral appeal of Rachels's view. Our personal interests and relationships should not always take precedence over the demands of morality -- e.g., should I could save my wife from drowning rather than diffusing a nuclear bomb which is about to devastate New York? (Even those who might think it obvious that I should save my wife, would presumably recognize this is a question with clear moral dimensions.) Hence, it would be ideal if we could find some way to show that a proper understanding of both morality and personal relationships are not necessarily at odds, but actually mutually supportive.

THE INTERPLAY OF MORALITY AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ideal, but difficult. For as I mentioned earlier, they do appear to be at odds. Sometimes when moral concern for strangers conflicts with

concern for those we love, we assume concern for our intimates should take precedence. Yet giving unbridled preference to our intimates appears to conflict with the principle of impartiality, and that principle lies at the heart of our ordinary moral understanding. Perhaps, though, these views are not as far apart as we first supposed. Rachels, for example, acknowledges the importance of personal relationships; indeed, he sees them as ineliminable elements of the moral scheme. However, he thinks concern for our intimates should not blind us to the legitimate needs of strangers. Specifically, he decries the callousness we sometimes show when we become preoccupied with our intimates or with our projects.

And, although Williams claims our interest in close relationships should take precedence over impartial moral demands. Yet in the case he offers to illustrate his misgivings with impartialism, he relies on some form of impartialism. Let me explain, Williams claims a man can save his wife rather than a stranger, even if impartialist principles suggest otherwise. Yet his commentary on the case indicates that he believes something stronger than this, namely, that it would be positively *wrong* for the man to save his stranger rather than his wife, regardless of his reasons for doing so.

Suppose my "personal project" were to be impartial. That implies that I should decide whom to save for impartial reasons, perhaps by flipping a coin. I suspect Williams would think it would be wrong for me to save the stranger instead of my wife, even if that were what my personal project required. Put more generally, I think he thinks that *any* person should save his spouse instead of a stranger. And this belief is presumably reflects some impartial principle. Of course, as Williams notes, it would be most infelicitous were the man to announce this principle (even to himself) while rescuing his wife. But that only shows that the principle does not -- and should not -- consciously motivate his actions. It is no way shows that impartialist principles do not justify the action. Indeed, as I suggested earlier, distinguishing between the motive and justification for an action may help us see that these seemingly opposed positions are, with appropriate modification, perhaps not really so far apart.

Why an accommodation is difficult

But an accommodation will not be easy. For there are elements of morality, as typically understood, which make it more likely to conflict with personal relationships. Specifically, widely held views of morality: 1) construe

moral rules legalistically, 2) give limited scope to moral judgement, 3) have a narrow understanding of moral motivation, and are, therefore, d) unconcerned with developing the appropriate moral motivation.

Immanuel Kant, as traditionally interpreted, embodies just such a view of morality. Kant apparently embraces a legalistic view of morality according to which moral rules uniquely determine what we ought to do -- at least they uniquely determine what Kant deems our "perfect duties" (1981: 30-3). Legalistic views naturally leave little room for moral judgement: moral agents need judge only how to apply the exceptionless moral rules. Moreover, those who embrace such views are relatively unconcerned about how to make people behave morally. Kant, for instance, claims that an act is devoid of moral worth if we are motivated by self-interest or inclination (1981: 7-12). Put differently, an action has moral worth only if we are motivated exclusively by the desire to do our duty. He has no suggestions about how to inculcate the desire to do our duty. Indeed, he couldn't. It is not hard to see why: any suggestion would inevitably make reference to other motives (self-interest, inclination, love, etc.) and, on his view, it would be moral inappropriate to develop moral motives for non-moral reasons.

In a series of influential articles, Barbara Herman challenges this standard interpretation of Kant (1993, 1990, 1985, 1983). However, even if Herman is correct, many people do interpret Kant in these ways; moreover, whether Kantian or not, it is a view many people do hold. Even William Frankena, who more than twenty years ago recognized the potential appeal of "virtue ethics," nonetheless describes the first job of morality as determining our "moral obligations" -- where his examples of obligations are described in terms of specific actions we should perform (1973: 10-11).

However, this Kantian view of morality fails to give specific guidance about how we should behave in real life, complex situations. Moreover, this account makes it nigh impossible to understand or inculcate moral dispositions. To help understand these defects of a legalistic morality, I will borrow an example from an earlier paper. Suppose I have a friend who, some months ago, experienced a profound personal tragedy. How should I relate to her? Should I be a non-judgmental listener, sensitive to her continuing pain? Should I offer advice, even if it is not requested? Or should I simply ignore, or at least downplay, the trauma to help her "get on with her life"?

Clearly it is desirable -- though doubtless annoying -- to have friends play these (and other) diverse roles. If everyone were a sensitive listener, she could get mired in her trauma. If everyone offered her unsolicited advice, she could lose her self respect. If everyone refused to discuss the trauma, she might never be able to satisfactorily resolve it. A mixture of reactions is not simply permissible, it may well be crucial for her recovery. One response will not help her (LaFollette 1991: 148-9).

Hence no general rule will tell me what I should do. I must judge what I, with my particular temperament and abilities, can best do to respond to her sensitively, given her needs and the character of our relationship. If I have inculcated sensitivity and kindness, I may act appropriately. Yet there is no precise description of what "acting appropriately" would be.

But on traditional Kantian account of morality, abstract rules -- not concrete moral judgement -- should direct my action. On this view, the only role of judgement is in applying exceptionless moral principles, much like a referee. The rules of the football game may be variously interpreted, and even if the rule is unambiguous, its application in a particular case may be uncertain. Someone must apply them. Likewise for ethics. Ethical rules are exceptionless, but agents must apply them to individual circumstances.

However, this analogy fails to give appropriate scope to moral judgement. In football there are clearly delineated rules all referees must follow. Moral agents, however, do not merely apply rules, certainly not in the case under discussion. It *might* be tempting to say that all her friends are following a rule, perhaps one like: "Be loving to your intimates." However, this is not a rule, at least not one comparable to the rules of football. It is vague. A comparably vague (and thus totally useless) rule in football might be: "Play fairly." This rule is without content. Any attempt to give it precise content will either fail, yield an unacceptable rule, or reduce to some more precise rule. Consequently, since this case describes moral choices people frequently do face, then this Kantian account of moral judgement will be inadequate to the task.

Relatedly, this standard view is relatively indifferent about what motivates people to be moral and how they can become moral. Admittedly some traditional theorists are quite concerned about

moral education and morality. For instance, J.S. Mill, who is often portrayed as endorsing a rule conception of morality, recognizes the importance of judgement and the need for moral education:

"As the means of making the nearest approach to this ideal, utility would enjoin, first, that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness... of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole; ... so that not only he may be unable to conceive the possibility of happiness to himself, consistently with conduct opposed to the general good, but also that a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual motives of action...." (p. 17)

In fact, a growing number of philosophers are concerned in moral development. Owen Flanigan and Laurence Thomas, for instance, have offered two impressive accounts of moral development (Flanigan 1993; Thomas 1991). Embedded in a richer understanding of moral development and moral psychology, we will find the an account of morality which both supports and is informed by personal relationships.

Moral habits

The key to understanding the interplay of morality and personal relationships is to understand that morality is, at its core, not a continuous series of choices, but a network of habits. By "habits" I do not mean some mere behavioral repetition, like biting one's nails. I follow Dewey in seeing habits as working adaptations of the organism with its environment. Habits are "that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity, which contains within itself a certain order of systemization of minor elements of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation; and which is operative in some subdued subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity" (Dewey 1988: 39).

Most human activity is habitual. It couldn't be otherwise. We couldn't walk or write or drive or think if we had to consciously determine to take the next step, write the next word, apply the brakes, or add two numbers. Morality joins thinking, emotions, and work as habits. "Habit means special sensitiveness of accessibility to certain

classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts. It means will" (p. 41) Consider thinking which is generally understood as the paradigm of a conscious, self-directed activity. Dewey (and I) would beg to differ: thinking is also a habit, albeit a complex one. A thoughtful person does not *decide* to think about an important issue, nor does she typically have to decide *how* to think about it. Her education and training makes her sensitive to certain types of problems and instills a disposition to think about those problems in a certain way. And emotions, as I argued in chapter two, are also habits. Certain kinds of situations (or people) typically incite anger or desire or fear. I do not have to decide to fear a dog or to become angry if someone attacks my child.

However, I wish to emphasize again: habits are not mere repetitions of behavior. Habits -- at least those of interest here -- are very fine-grained: they prompt different responses to different situations. For instance, the habit of thinking does not require that we think about all problems in exactly the same way. The habit can be sufficiently complex and supple so that we make suitable adjustments in the way we think about a problem, depending on the nature of that problem.

Morality is also a complex habit -- not some mysterious and inexplicable practice of abstract rational contemplation. To treat morality as primarily the conscious adherence to a set of rules will inevitably lead to its failure. If, in each and every case, we had to rely on conscious decisions to be moral, we would be even less moral than we are. Moral education (whether by others or by ourselves) is successful if we become habitually sensitive to the needs and interests of others. That is, if we are moral, we do not have to decide to consider the interests of others, we just will consider their interests. And, since moral habits, like habits of thought, can be very complex, very fine-grained, they empower us to respond sensitively to others in a variety of circumstances.

Once we appreciate the habitual nature of morality, the weakness of Kant's views (as traditionally understood) becomes apparent. We are not -- nor could we be -- moral if, on each and every occasion, we had to a) decide what was morally relevant, b) decide to fully consider all that is morally relevant, and c) decide to act upon the results of our deliberations. Rather, if we are moral, we do habitually what we should do (Aristotle 1985: 34). A truly moral person is not forced to act morally; rather it is something she does by inclination -- it is part of her, that is, it is one of her habits, one of her deeper disposing traits.

Of course to acknowledge that morality is a habit does not mean we need never deliberate, nor does it imply that we need never act against our current habits (although the ability to abandon or modify a current habit is, itself, a different type of habit, a meta-habit if you will.) As Kant rightly points out, morality sometimes demands that we act against our inclinations. Modifying our habits so that we are inclined to do what we ought is a crucial element of morality. Unfortunately, many of us do not have the strength -- or the sufficiently ingrained meta-habits -- to do that. My point here is simply that *most* behavior -- including moral behavior -- is habitual. Thus, if we do not have deeply ingrained and finely textured moral habits, then we will behave immorally.

Inculcating moral habits

Once we see that morality is a habit, we are better equipped to understand two ways in which morality and personal relationships are supportive: 1) close personal relationships give us the knowledge and the motivation to develop an impartial morality; and 2) intimacy flourishes in an environment which impartially recognizes the needs and interests of all. Understanding these connections will not dissolve the tensions between impartial moral demands and close personal relationships, but it will certainly make them more amenable to resolution.

For instance, close personal relationships can empower us to act morally, they are grist for the moral mill. Different ethical theorists disagree about the extent of the concern we must have for everyone, but all agree that morality requires that we consider (even promote) the interests of others. But how do we learn how to promote others' interests? How do we become motivated to promote those interests?

Suppose, e.g., you are standing next to someone who has an epileptic seizure, but you have never heard of epilepsy, let alone witnessed a seizure. Or suppose you are stranded on an elevator with someone having a heart attack, but you don't know people have hearts, let alone that they can malfunction. In short, try to imagine that you were in one of these circumstances when you were seven years old. You would do nothing. Or if you tried, it would likely do more harm than good; any success would surely be serendipitous.

We cannot develop knowledge necessary to act morally unless we have been in intimate relationships. No one knows how to do mathematics or to play football without acquaintance with the discipline or the game. The same is generally true of any attempt to promote the interests of others. Someone reared by uncaring parents, who never established close personal ties with others, will simply not know how to look after or promote the interests of intimates or strangers. We cannot promote interests we cannot identify, and the way we learn to identify the interests of others is by interacting with them. For instance, most of us learned from our families how to recognize the needs of others. Our parents comforted us when we were hurt; they laughed with us when we were happy. Eventually, we learned to identify their interests and to be concerned about them.

Without that experience, we not only would not have the knowledge we need to promote other's interests, we wouldn't have the inclination either. Though I expect we may have some biologically inherited sympathetic tendencies, these will wither unless others cared for us and we for them. If we are not motivated to promote the needs of our families or friends, how can we be motivated to promote the needs of strangers?

On the other hand, if we develop empathy toward our friends, we will have some inclination to generalize it to others. In close relationships we become so vividly aware of our intimate's needs that we are willing to help them, even when it is difficult to do so. But empathy is typically non-specific. Therefore, by learning to respond to the interests of friends, we also learn to respond to the interests of acquaintances and even strangers.

My point is not simply that a person must have some exposure to loving personal relationships in order to know how to care or to be motivated to care. There is also a strong correlation between the extent of a person's involvement in close relationships and the extent of her ability and motivation to care for strangers. That is, if we have had several close relationships, we will learn how to best respond to different intimates' needs in a variety of circumstances. Our moral horizons will be opened up by such encounters. We must learn ways people suffer -- ways which had previously escaped our attention. We can learn how to ease their suffering. And we will learn the myriad ways to promote the interests of others.

That is not to say that those who develop close relationships always

come to care for strangers. My point is simply that a person must have some exposure to personal relationships to acquire the knowledge and motivation to be moral. Put differently, a person cannot be just or moral in a vacuum; she can become just only within an environment which countenances personal relationships.

On the other hand, an environment which recognizes the needs of strangers (i.e., an impartialist's morality) will be one in which intimacy is more likely to flourish. A society concerned about the needs and interests of everyone, including strangers, is one in which empathy, caring, and honesty, etc., are prized. And a society which prizes these behaviors will be one which thereby equips its citizens for close personal relationships.

We can see this clearly if we try to think about attempted personal relationships between non-moral people. Their relationships will be at risk. Morally wicked people cannot be close friends. I recognize this claim is rather controversial; many people would consider it patently false. I think, though, that is because they do not fully appreciate what it means to have a close relationship. Let me rehearse a number of arguments from throughout the book to support this claim.

First, in close personal relationships each party must have, as one of her interests, an interest in the other. Thus, if Al and Frank are close personal friends, then one of Al's interest must be to promote Frank's interests, and one of Frank's interests is to promote Al's. Put differently, neither Frank nor Al can be entirely egoistic. Each must be concerned with something besides himself, namely, his friends. But can a morally wicked person have such concerns? I don't see how. Moral wickedness is paradigmatically a complete disregard for the interests of others.¹

All this seems too easy. Surely even crooks and gangsters -- whom we typically consider morally wicked -- can have close friends. We do think this, but perhaps we shouldn't. If (and this is a big if) these people do have close relationships -- if they really do care for other people -- then, although they are doubtless immoral in some respects (as are we all) we should conclude that they are not completely wicked. They are good inasmuch as they really care about others. In fact, I suspect this is the right way to think about most criminals; the

¹ Of course not all evil in the world stems from morally wicked people. In fact, arguably most evil stems from the ignorance and inattention of morally decent people. My point here, though, is not about the primary sources of evil, but about the troubles wicked people will have in close relationships.

world is not neatly divided into "the good guys" and "the bad guys." We all have flaws and foibles. Even the worst person has good features and the most saintly person is riddled with faults.

However, let us think, for a moment, about people who are paradigmatically evil, yet appear to be friends. Do these people have genuine friendships? My answer is a guarded "No." There are other plausible explanations for their seeming friendly behavior. Suppose Al and Frank are kingpins in organized crime. By all outward appearances they are the best of friends. They say they care for each other; they are friends. I would suggest, however, that they are friendly merely because they are afraid not to be. What makes them act amicably toward each other is not that each wishes the other well (one of the criteria of friendship). Rather it is that each thinks he can best promote his own interests by maintaining an air of friendship with the other.

But that air can be polluted suddenly if either thinks the other is in some way jeopardizing "the family business." Chronicles of gangland days in the United States are replete with cases where one boss would kill their best friend or even members of their family because they had violated some code. In these cases Frank and Al do not have a friendship; rather they have a role relationship supported by an unwritten code of conduct. What keeps the "relationship" together is not mutual well-wishing, but a fear of what will happen if either breaks that code. And that, most surely, is not at the center of close personal relationships.

We can understand the failure of these relationships in general terms by citing each person's exclusive attention to his own interests. There are, however, more fine-grained explanations. Close relationships, as I have argued throughout the book, are possible only inasmuch as each party trusts the other (chapter 8). Each must trust the other will not hurt or abuse her; each must trust the other to care for her. But trust cannot survive, let alone flourish, in an environment of distrust and hate.

Intimates must also be honest with one another; dishonesty will chip away at the foundations of the relationship (chapter 9). Yet people cannot be honest in the ways they need if they are immersed in a sub-culture built on dishonesty and deceit. Dishonesty, like all traits, is not something we can turn on and off. If we are dishonest with large numbers of people at work, we will be similarly inclined at home. Assuming Frank and Al are not stupid, they know that. That is why each will be leery of the other; each will always be suspicious that

the other is lying. And, to connect concerns about honesty with the previously mentioned concern about trust, we cannot really be honest with others unless we trust them. Mistrust squelches honesty.

In short, the possibility of genuine personal relationships is limited, if not eliminated, in an unjust environment. More especially, a person is unlikely to have close relationships unless she is moral. Anyone unconcerned with the welfare of other people, that is, anyone who is a- or immoral, will enter a relationship for her own benefit. Thus the relationship will not be personal in the relevant sense. =

Consequently, personal relationships and morality are not at odds in the ways many philosophers have supposed. Rather, they are mutually supportive. Experience and involvement in close relationships will enhance our interest in and sympathy for the plight of others. Conversely, concern about the plight of the stranger will help us develop the traits necessary for close personal relationships.

Of course not everyone who has friends is concerned for strangers and not everyone who is concerned about strangers will be a good friend -- though I suspect each will at least be capable of doing so. Nonetheless, these concerns could not exist in isolation. They are mutually supportive; they are not in constant conflict. Conflicts do arise. They arise in the same way that any moral conflicts arise, for instance, duties to two friends may conflict as may duties to two strangers. But such conflicts do not show that morality is impossible; they only show that it is sometimes difficult to achieve. But then, we already knew that.