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The Case for Restricted Perfectionism in Upbringing

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Abstract

Political liberals aim to treat citizens as free and equal participants in a society governed by principles endorsable from a wide range of reasonable conceptions of the good. This popular account of political morality struggles to accommodate child citizens yet to develop the capacities for freedom and equality enjoyed by citizens under political liberalism. It appears political liberals must either accept political liberalism should not apply to all citizens or intrusively constrain parental rights to shape the values of their children in line with anti-perfectionism. I defend a third possibility that justifies perfectionism in parenting and anti-perfectionism in education.

Liberal perfectionists argue liberal states can legitimately act to improve the lives of citizens even when such policies are justified on controversial grounds.¹ Anti-perfectionist liberals deny this claim, often appealing to reasonable pluralism and persistent disagreement over what constitutes a good life to prohibit unreasonably controversial political policies.² Rather, they restrict political legitimacy to policies justifiable via a limited range of shared public reasons. The most prominent form of anti-perfectionist liberalism – political liberalism – establishes legitimacy through reciprocal reason-giving derived from an

¹ “...in principle all moral reasons are fair game for governmental action. “Perfectionism” is merely a term used to indicate that there is no fundamental principled inhibition on governments acting for any valid moral reason.” (Raz 1989: 1230).

² “...our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason.” (Rawls 2005: 137).

overlapping consensus of reasonable views.³ Call the principle constraining legitimate state policies to those justifiable on these grounds the *public reason constraint*.⁴

Children pose an important challenge to the public reason constraint. Aging creates many significant, unchosen, and ubiquitous differences between us. Justifying the differential status and treatment of child citizens is particularly challenging for political liberals because children lack capacities commonly understood to motivate the public reason constraint. Children lack the personal autonomy to form, revise, and pursue a conception of the good that explains why perfectionist interference in our pursuit of our conception of the good is objectionable.⁵ Children also lack the political autonomy of legal independence and political integrity that public reasoning respects (Rawls 2005: xlii). Lacking these capacities, children cannot enjoy a central benefit of political liberalism - being recognised as a free and equal citizen in a liberal society.

The traditional political liberal response to this challenge is unsatisfactory. It begins with John Rawls' (2005: 258) distinction between public and domestic spheres. Rawls' conceptualisation of the family awkwardly straddles this distinction. He identifies the family as part of the basic structure of society because it serves important social roles. Child-rearing families help to ensure justice across generations (Rawls 1971: 128), establish a sense of justice in children (Rawls 1971: 453-479), and help to maintain a well-ordered society by reproducing cultural norms (Rawls 2001: 162-68). Although these social roles

³ "In such a consensus, the reasonable doctrines endorse the political conception, each from its own point of view. Social unity is based on a consensus on the political conception; and stability is possible when the doctrines making up the consensus are affirmed by society's politically active citizens and the requirements of justice are not too much in conflict with citizens' essential interests as formed and encouraged by their social arrangements." (Rawls 2005: 134). See also Rawls 2005: 133-72; Rawls 2005: 385-95; Rawls 2001: 32-8.

⁴ Rawls favours the term "the Duty of Civility" (Rawls 2005: 217). For discussion of public reasoning, see Quong 2014: 265-280. I interpret the public reason constraint relatively broadly. For reasons against an overly narrow interpretation, see Quong 2011: 273-287.

⁵ This is the second of Rawls' two moral powers - the capacity for a sense of justice and for a conception of the good (Rawls 2005: 19).

are important, Rawls hesitates to meddle in family affairs for reasons of justice. Families best serve their social roles when granted partial protection from state interference. Families should not be dominated by political interference even though they often pose significant hurdles to principles of justice, including fair equality of opportunity (Rawls 1971: 511; Munoz-Dardé 1998; Munoz-Dardé 1999; de Wijze 2000; Brighthouse and Swift 2014: 23-45; Gheaus 2018.). As these principles of justice apply to the basic structure, and the family is part of the basic structure, political liberals face a troubling tension between justice and the family.⁶

Rawls (2005: 468) attempts to resolve this tension by “indirectly” constraining the family. The importance of the social roles families serve constrains how society pursues justice (Rawls 2005: 467). The principles of justice should apply directly to the basic structure but should not apply directly to the “internal life” of certain associations within the basic structure, including the family (Rawls 1971: 166). This compromise attempts to include the family within the basic structure without endangering intimate familial relationships.

This compromise is unsatisfactory for two reasons (Neufeld 2009). First, the basic structure cannot indirectly constrain institutions without threatening their place within itself. The basic structure is binary – its principles of justice directly constrain constituent institutions and indirectly constrain all other social institutions to some degree. Consequently, the appeal to indirect constraints does not plausibly include the family within the basic structure.

Second, this solution significantly mischaracterises childhood familial relations. Although adults can often voluntarily begin, end, join, or exit families similarly to private institutions outside the basic structure, children rarely choose which family they enter or whether they

⁶ Rawls (2005: 270) accepts the basic structure is likely to permit (potentially inevitable) inequalities in our life prospects.

can exit families they find themselves within. Children commonly lack rights of voluntary entry and exit. This relational difference distinguishes families from other superficially similar voluntary private associations, such as churches or universities, and helps explain the importance of justice for vulnerable parties within intimate familial relationships. The appeal to indirect constraints is not properly sensitive to this fact.

These problems create an *apparent dilemma* for political liberals: The private functions of families must be protected without undermining the public importance of families. To ensure intimate familial relations serve social roles, political liberals must constrain families indirectly, like voluntary private associations. However, children do not interact with families like voluntary private associations and so more direct constraints may be required to protect children as vulnerable parties within familial relations. Yet such constraints threaten the intimacy of familial relations and the social roles families serve.

There have been two important responses to this apparent dilemma. One response appeals to differences between adults and children to justify political liberals legitimately restricting anti-perfectionism to adult citizens while simultaneously pursuing child-focussed perfectionist policies not intended to improve the lives of adult citizens (Fowler 2014). The *difference argument* restricts the public reason constraint to adults and argues that child-focussed perfectionist policies are consistent with political liberalism.

Another response appeals to similarities between the state-citizen relationship and the parent-child relationship to suggest both relationships impose coercive constraints upon vulnerable parties who are involuntarily subject to powerful others (Clayton 2006). Anti-perfectionism prevents states from perfectionist interference into citizens' lives for these reasons and so it should also prevent parents from perfectionist interference into children's lives for similar reasons. The *similarity argument* extends the public reason constraint from

political relationships into parental relationships and argues that political liberalism prohibits child-focussed perfectionist policies.

The difference and similarity arguments are controversial responses to the apparent dilemma child citizens pose to political liberalism. Both entail revisionary conclusions for how liberals should treat children. The difference argument suggests many schools are failing to discharge their duty to shape the lives of students regardless of reasonable pluralism. The similarity argument suggests many parents are wrongfully passing on their own reasonably controversial views of the good life to their children.

Liberals need not choose between these unsatisfactory arguments. Both arguments are inferior to a third: perfectionism in parenting and anti-perfectionism in education. I argue that liberals should clarify and revise the moral division of labour between families and schools to establish a balance between *parental perfectionism* and *pedagogical anti-perfectionism*. This balance resolves the apparent dilemma facing political liberals by reconceptualising the legitimate social roles served by families and reconstructing a principled justification for a division of labour many families and schools already follow in practice. This solution better captures the normatively significant differences between political and parental power and harnesses these differences to restrict perfectionism to childhood in a more plausible, robust, and intuitive manner than either difference or similarity arguments.

1. The Difference Argument

The difference argument claims that anti-perfectionism applies to citizens whose autonomy demands they should be treated as free and equal. Children do not possess the requisite capacities for autonomy. This difference justifies political liberals coherently supporting perfectionism for children and anti-perfectionism for adults. An illustrative example of the difference argument is found in the work of Timothy Fowler (2014), who

argues that many anti-perfectionist objections to perfectionism should not apply to child-focussed perfectionism due to important facts of childhood development.⁷ In this section, I outline Fowler's view and argue that it offers the wrong grounds to establish its conclusion. Political liberals cannot make autonomy-based distinctions between citizens without sacrificing distinctive political liberal commitments. This illustrates an important weakness in the difference argument.

Fowler's argument for child-focussed perfectionism responds to the objection that perfectionism disrespects our autonomy.⁸ Fowler conceives of this objection in terms of *personal* autonomy. The objection to perfectionism based on respect for personal autonomy does not extend to children because children are still developing autonomous conceptions of the good. Children do not fully possess what Rawls names the Second Moral Power – the capacity to form, revise, and pursue a conception of the good.⁹ This developmental fact guarantees child-focussed perfectionist policies will not conflict with pre-existing autonomous conceptions of the good in the way adult-focussed perfectionist policies would (Fowler 2014: 314; Fowler 2010: 368). Perfectionism toward children is less disrespectful than perfectionism toward adults because children lack the sovereign status of mature autonomous agents while developing (Feinberg 1992).

Fowler's argument relies on the intuition that having your life shaped by others intending to benefit you is unobjectionable if you lack autonomous preferences at the time of interference and you can revise any acquired preferences once you develop the second

⁷ Fowler presents his theory as an alternative to political liberalism. As his theory restricts the scope of the public reason constraint in response to the apparent dilemma facing political liberals, I characterise it as a response for political liberals to consider. For a sustained defence of perfectionism in upbringing, see Fowler 2020.

⁸ "As an autonomous individual can and should make these choices for themselves, perfectionist interventions show disrespect for the autonomy of the affected citizens." (Fowler 2014: 311).

⁹ "The capacity for a conception of the good is the capacity to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one's rational advantage or good." (Rawls 2005: 19). A conception of the good includes a sense of our rational advantage alongside a sense of what is valuable in human life. On childhood autonomy, see Mullin 2014.

moral power. This intuition supports the following test of respect for a child's diminished personal autonomy: does the child develop the capacities for autonomous choice and can they revise their conception of the good upon maturity?¹⁰ If perfectionist policies do not threaten the childhood development of capacities for personal autonomy or the subsequent enjoyment of these capacities then these policies respect the developing autonomy of children. This test establishes the compatibility of anti-perfectionism for adults with perfectionism for children.

This argument disfigures political liberalism's conception of citizenship. Political liberals cannot coherently subject citizens temporarily lacking the capacities for personal autonomy to perfectionist policies. Anti-perfectionism is owed to citizens and citizenship does not depend on whether an individual is currently personally autonomous. The old, the young, and the infirm do not fall out of the state's anti-perfectionist regard when their capacities fail them.¹¹ Political liberalism's conception of citizenship is explicitly normative not psychological. It is based on a normative notion of cooperation on fair terms applying over a lifespan rather than the possession of certain psychological capacities.¹² While citizens must modestly exercise some psychological capacities to socially cooperate, it is the assumption of social cooperation that primarily designates individuals as citizens, not the possession of psychological capacities. Political liberals must treat children as citizens as they are expected to become capable of fair cooperation. This treatment is crucial to the moral equality of citizens within political liberalism.

¹⁰ Clayton (2006: 89-91) names this the "End-State" conception of autonomy.

¹¹ Rawls (1971: 248-250) subscribes to principles of paternalism guided by individual rational preferences or, where unknown, the theory of primary goods. These principles insure individuals against lacking the reason and will to manage their own affairs. The principles should guarantee the integrity of an individual's pursuit of their rational ends and beliefs and be capable of gaining retrospective consent from the individual. There is "great urgency" in enabling citizens to "resume their normal lives as cooperating members of society" where possible (Rawls 2001: 174).

¹² "As suits a political conception of justice that views society as a fair system of cooperation, a citizen is someone who can be a free and equal participant over a complete life." (Rawls 2001: 24).

This normative conception of citizenship stems from the requirement that a just society is sustainable across generations. Just societies are fair systems of social cooperation shaped by rules governing citizens “...as normal and fully cooperating members of society over a complete life, from one generation to the next” (Rawls 2001: 8). The public reason constraint aids the fair social cooperation of free and equal citizens by appealing to public rather than comprehensive reasons. In contrast, child-focused perfectionism appeals to comprehensive reasons beyond those required to justify a fair system of social cooperation. Childhood is usually only a *temporary* obstacle to social cooperation as child citizens mature into adult citizens (Clayton 2012: 362). Furthermore, childhood is usually only a *partial* obstacle to social cooperation as child citizens often cooperate in society to some degree. Child citizens can play a significant role in family life, participate in the civic sphere, and exchange labour for wages in limited cases. Society tangibly benefits from their cooperation. For this reason, political liberals should conceive of children as partially cooperating citizens capable of developing into fully cooperating citizens as they mature. This warrants political liberals extending respectful anti-perfectionist treatment to child citizens.

This response generalises to other versions of the difference argument based on psychological differences in capacities for autonomy. For example, proponents might argue that citizens must be capable of *political* autonomy.¹³ Political autonomy is enjoyed by free and equal citizens who possess the two moral powers. Children cannot make good use of these moral powers. They lack the political autonomy required for citizenship and are not owed anti-perfectionist policies.

This argument fails for similar reasons as the prior argument – whether an individual can make good use of the moral powers does not determine their citizenship. Citizenship is

¹³ Rawls (2005: xlii) defines political autonomy as: “...the legal independence and assured political integrity of citizens and their sharing with other citizens equally in the exercise of political power.” See also, Freeman 2007: 362.

not owed to those who currently enjoy the moral powers as a psychological conception of citizenship suggests. Rather, political liberalism's normative conception of citizenship requires us to treat child citizens as if they possess the moral powers so long as they are expected to be capable of fair cooperation over their lives (Rawls 2001: 19-24).

Political liberalism employs a normative conception of citizenship to determine who is subject to the public reason constraint. This prevents proponents of the difference argument from relying solely on psychological differences between citizens to justify differential treatment. Attention must instead be paid to how psychological capacities determine our ability to cooperate on fair terms.¹⁴ Proponents must explain why political liberals are mistaken in respecting the emerging capacities for autonomy in children by assigning them powers of citizenship that they are expected to enjoy as they develop.

This strategy will be challenging, however, because the revised conception of citizenship must remain compatible with the broader *political* basis of political liberalism. Political liberalism provides a free-standing non-comprehensive justification for anti-perfectionist liberalism (Quong 2011: 12-44). The difference argument's appeal to personal autonomy threatens the non-comprehensive nature of political liberalism by directing the proper functioning of the public reason constraint toward possessors of the capacities for personal autonomy. This changes the basis for political liberals treating citizens as free and equal from a relatively uncontroversial answer following from shared liberal democratic norms – that citizens are capable of cooperation on fair terms – to a more comprehensive and reasonably controversial answer following from the inherent value of psychological capacities – that citizens enjoy the capacities for personal autonomy. This change will rely on the inherent value of personal autonomy beyond that required for fair cooperation and

¹⁴ On the relationship between personhood and social cooperation, see Rawls 2005: 299-304. On moral psychology, see Rawls, 2001: 196-7.

relegate those suffering diminished capacities for personal autonomy to less than free and equal treatment under the public reason constraint. These controversial consequences illustrate why the difference argument may ultimately require political liberals to give up much of what makes political liberalism distinctive.

The difference argument appears plausible by conflating two separate questions – who should be a citizen and how should citizens be treated – into a single autonomy-based claim. These are not two instances of the same question. Political liberals provide different answers to each. Anti-perfectionist respect for citizens as free and equal self-authenticating sources of moral claims appears to imply the puzzling result that liberals must respect the autonomy of citizens who do not yet possess the capacity for it (Rawls 2005: 32-3). But looks can be deceiving - political liberals should respect children as future citizens even if they are unable to currently enjoy all of the opportunities afforded to them. Anti-perfectionism is owed to citizens presumed to be capable of engaging in mutually beneficial social cooperation on fair terms over their lifetime. The fact that children temporarily lack autonomy cannot justify political liberals subjecting them to perfectionist policies.

2. The Similarity Argument

We have seen that differences in autonomy cannot justify political liberals subjecting children to perfectionist policies without risking distinctive commitments of the political liberal project. We now turn to an alternative response to the apparent dilemma facing political liberalism - the similarity argument. Rather than revising the reasons behind political liberalism's anti-perfectionism, the similarity argument extends political liberalism's orthodox reasons for anti-perfectionism to children. Political liberals accept certain features of the state-citizen relationship justify political anti-perfectionism. The

similarity argument claims these features also characterise parent-child relationships and justify parental anti-perfectionism.

A prominent example of the similarity argument is found in Matthew Clayton's defence of parental anti-perfectionism. In what follows, I outline Clayton's argument and object that, although the similarities he identifies are important, parental perfectionism risks distinctive morally weighty features of familial relationships. Clayton's argument does not offer a complete picture of the normative landscape of parenting, and a fuller picture of this landscape does not support parental anti-perfectionism. This illustrates an important weakness in the similarity argument.

Clayton (2006: 93-4) argues political liberals have weighty reasons to protect both children and adults from perfectionist policies that intentionally promote controversial ethical values. Both parent-child and state-citizen relationships are: i) non-voluntary, ii) capable of having profound influence over vulnerable parties, and iii) often coercive. Political policies can have profound effects on citizens' lives without their consent. Parental behaviour can have similarly profound effects on children's lives. Anti-perfectionism is owed across both political and domestic spheres due to their structural similarities. The political liberal state refrains from subjecting adults to perfectionist policies. It must also require parents to refrain from raising their children in a perfectionist manner on the grounds of consistency. These similarities support a different test of respect for a child's status - one of independence, in line with how political liberals aim to respect adult citizens.¹⁵ Political liberals owe child citizens independence to respect them as free and equal self-authenticating sources of moral claims. Child-focussed perfectionism's promotion of

¹⁵ Clayton (2006: 104) favours a "Pre-Condition" conception of childhood autonomy: "Being used or led by others is problematic whether the person used has autonomous convictions that are ignored, or does not have any autonomous convictions." See also Clayton 2009.

certain ways of life over others due to their inherent value fails this test. This test establishes the incompatibility between political liberalism and child-focussed perfectionism.

Proponents of the difference argument may object that developmental facts ensure children must non-autonomously form preferences as they develop. The more appropriate test is the test of diminished personal autonomy seen above. Clayton rejects this line of thought. Political liberals should object to children forming reasonably controversial beliefs about the good as a nonvoluntary consequence of intentional guidance from overbearing adults. We might agree with Fowler that the impressionable nature of children guarantees that adults cannot help but shape many of their convictions and yet remain concerned that perfectionist forms of intentional value-shaping are objectionable for orthodox political liberal reasons.

To see how parental anti-perfectionism extends the public reason constraint into parent-child relationships, consider:

Test Match – Alice’s parent wants to bond with her and regularly takes her to the local cricket ground to spend time together during weekends. Alice often sees Brian at the ground. Brian’s parent is a lifelong supporter of the local team and wants Brian to share in the trials and tribulations of supporting them because Brian’s parent believes doing so will greatly improve Brian’s life.

Alice’s parent intentionally shapes Alice’s life so that she forms a better familial bond and unintentionally shapes her preferences about cricket as a side-effect. The primary purpose of their time at the cricket ground is for Alice to benefit from spending time with her parent and not to benefit from developing a deep love of cricket. The flourishing she derives from attending cricket matches should be divided between the results of intended

shaping (developing the familial bond) and the results of unintended shaping (developing a love of cricket). Parental anti-perfectionism subjects flourishing derived from intended shaping to the public reason constraint. The intended shaping for Alice is to develop a familial bond with her parent. Familial bonds contribute to the social roles families legitimately play within political liberalism. This intended shaping can be supported from within the reasonable overlapping consensus and is compatible with the public reason constraint.

Shaping that would be incompatible with the public reason constraint is any comprehensive belief in flourishing via cricket Alice develops due to her time at the ground. However, even if Alice does subsequently grow to love cricket, this shaping is unintended in this instance and not subject to the public reason constraint. Consequently, Alice's parent passes the test of parental anti-perfectionism. Any flourishing Alice derives from her time spent with her parent is either intentional and publicly justifiable or unintentional and not subject to the public reason constraint.

In contrast, Brian's parent intentionally shapes Brian's preferences to form reasonably controversial beliefs about the inherent value of cricket. The flourishing Brian derives from attending the cricket match is an intended effect of his parent's desire to share their passion for the local team with him to improve his life. The intended effects of Brian's parent's actions are subject to the public reason constraint. A belief in the inherent value of cricket is not necessary for Brian's parental relationship to fulfil the social roles families serve within political liberalism. This intended shaping cannot be supported from within the reasonable overlapping consensus and is incompatible with the public reason constraint. Consequently, Brian's parent fails the test of parental anti-perfectionism.

Test Match illustrates how parental anti-perfectionism relies upon a dual distinction between intended and unintended shaping, and between publicly justified and publicly unjustified

shaping. Parental anti-perfectionism prohibits *publicly unjustified intentional value-shaping* due to the threat it poses to the independence of children (Clayton 2012).¹⁶ It prohibits Brian's parent from intentionally inculcating Brian as a local supporter for perfectionist reasons. Intentional shaping within parental relationships must be publicly justifiable and capable of support from within the reasonable overlapping consensus (Cormier 2018: 344). Publicly justifiable intentional shaping includes the shaping necessary for parental relationships to serve their social roles within political liberalism. Publicly unjustified shaping must be restricted to the unintended side-effects of parental relationships.

Parental anti-perfectionism should be rejected due to the significant risk it poses to the *intimacy* and *affection* that commonly characterise parent-child relationships. This risk is significant for two reasons. The first reason is that affection and intimacy help explain how well-functioning familial relationships benefit children, parents, and society at large. While a comprehensive survey of these benefits is beyond the limited scope of this article, recent work in the field highlights the following: First, these relationships help children flourish by helping them enjoy childhood opportunities for innocent adventure and develop into flourishing adults.¹⁷ Affectionate intimacy helps children develop trust in others, a positive conception of the self, knowledge of how to love, and developmental motivation (Liao 2015: 75-82). Affectionate intimacy also helps children to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and morally in an enjoyable manner (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 64). Second, these relationships help parental caregivers to flourish.¹⁸ This flourishing partly stems from the distinct opportunities for self-expression and creative self-extension parents enjoy (Macleod 2010a: 142). It also stems from the ways parents can enjoy caring for children

¹⁶ For doubts concerning the intention/foresight distinction within familial relationships, see Franklin-Hall 2019: 381-385.

¹⁷ On vulnerability and flourishing, see Macleod 2015. On inevitable harms in parenting, see Larkin 1974.

¹⁸ Parent-centred arguments are more controversial than child-centred arguments. The relevant benefits can be differentially weighted to reflect this controversy. I thank Matthew Clayton for raising this worry.

and benefit from discharging their caring responsibilities (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 87-93). Finally, these relationships benefit society by producing flourishing citizens who contribute important opportunities and resources to society's collective endeavours (Brownlee 2016b: 38-9).

Affection and intimacy work in tandem to contribute to our flourishing. Intimate relationships are different in kind from non-intimate relationships because intimate relationships require a form of reciprocal vulnerability between individuals that non-intimate relationships do not require. When we form intimate relationships with each other, we share our character and lives together in a distinctive manner. Intimacy allows others a unique glimpse into ourselves and in return gifts us with a sense of being uniquely understood by others.¹⁹ The intimacy of this sharing makes each individual vulnerable to the other. When both individuals share in this way then their vulnerability is reciprocal.

Reciprocal vulnerability makes intimate relationships distinctly personal and meaningful. Intimacy is the basis of many important characteristics in our closest relationships, such as joint narratives or shared mutual understanding.²⁰ We have weighty interests in establishing intimate relationships and avoiding isolation (Gheaus 2009; Brownlee 2013; Cordelli 2015a; Cordelli 2015b; Brownlee 2016a; Brownlee 2016b; Gheaus 2017). However, the vulnerability inherent to intimate relationships explains the potential harms of intimacy. For example, the intimacy of abusive relationships helps explain why they are so destructive (Humphries 2018). The vulnerability required for intimacy explains why intimate relationships must also be affectionate to contribute value to a life well lived.

When adults form affectionately intimate relationships, both individuals already possess conceptions of the good that they choose to share with each other. Affectionately intimate

¹⁹ On the nature and value of intimacy, see Armstrong 2003; Marar 2014.

²⁰ I thank Kimberley Brownlee for help with formulating this point.

parental relationships differ in two important ways: i) children lack pre-existing conceptions of the good, and ii) children are more open and impressionable than adults. These asymmetries explain why the reciprocal vulnerability found within affectionately intimate familial relationships has important distinctive moral features (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 91).

These distinctive features explain why threats to affectionate intimacy threaten our potential flourishing. These distinctive features also distinguish parental relationships from political relationships. This provides a second reason why parental anti-perfectionism's risk to affectionate intimacy is significant. While Clayton is correct that political and parental relationships share some similar features, parental relationships can possess valuable forms of affectionate intimacy that political relationships cannot.

To see this, consider the different senses of vulnerability at work in parental and political relationships. The similarity argument correctly acknowledges that parental and political relationships both share a sense of vulnerability as *non-protection* where stronger parties can potentially dominate vulnerable parties. However, the similarity argument is insensitive to the further fact that parental and political relationships do not share a different sense of vulnerability as *mutual attachment*. Individuals within well-functioning parental relationships benefit from an intimate form of reciprocal vulnerability that well-functioning political relationships cannot possess.

Political relationships cannot be as intimate as parental relationships because they cannot achieve the reciprocal vulnerability that characterises mutual attachment. The duties of political agents do not require mutual attachment.²¹ In contrast, well-functioning parental relationships do require mutual attachment. The reciprocal vulnerability necessary for

²¹ This is one reason why we question political agents forming intimate relationships for political purposes (Marx 1992).

forming mutual attachments is a significant source of intimacy found in well-functioning parental relationships. When this intimacy is also affectionate, then parents, children, and broader society benefit from these relationships.

Parental anti-perfectionism risks the flourishing found in mutual attachments intentionally formed on reasonably controversial grounds. Parental anti-perfectionism makes the value of affectionate intimacy conditional on the political legitimacy of the parental relationship (Clayton 2006: 115-8; Clayton 2009: 92-3). It recognises the affectionate intimacy of parental relationships serving their social roles within political liberalism. Affectionate intimacy motivates contracting parties to consider future citizens to help ensure justice across generations, aids parents in fostering a sense of justice in children to help support a well-ordered society, and transmits social norms to help secure background justice. Parental anti-perfectionism does not recognise the contributions to our flourishing from affectionate intimacy beyond these social roles.²²

In contrast, my argument from affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment suggests family members stand to gain by opening significant parts of their lives to each other in a reciprocally vulnerable manner regardless of whether their conceptions of the good are reasonably controversial. Doing so will allow us to all benefit from the affectionate intimacy found in familial relations. The similarity argument threatens this flourishing in cases of reasonable disagreement based on similarities between parental and political relationships. But as we have seen, this argument ignores important dissimilarities between the senses of vulnerability found in these relationships and discards important sources of flourishing found within parental relationships.

Test Match demonstrates parental anti-perfectionism's threat to affectionate intimacy. Consider how important the match is to Alice and Brian's relationships with their

²² For discussion of this in a religious context, see Weinstock 2017.

respective parents and the consequences of Alice and Brian coming to subsequently reject their weekends at the ground.²³ If Alice rejects her weekends at the ground, she rejects her shared time as less enjoyable than it could have been. If Brian rejects his weekends at the ground, he rejects more than this. He also rejects the inherent value of the shared activity of supporting the team as unsuitable for him. While Alice's parent may regret poorly spending time that could have been better spent elsewhere, Brian's parent will also regret more than this. Brian rejects the activity his parent intended to share with him. By doing so, Brian rejects the contribution this shared activity could make to his relationship with his parent. This is significant because Brian's time spent at the cricket ground is likely to be more important to his parental relationship than the time Alice spends there (Brighthouse and Swift 2014: 153-161). Brian's parent shapes Brian's values to a greater extent than Alice's parent shapes Alice's values. Becoming a cricket supporter will shape Brian's identity more deeply and pervasively than Alice's time spent at the ground will shape her identity (Raz 1986: 288-94).

The public reason constraint prevents parents who hold reasonably controversial conceptions of the good from permissibly intentionally shaping their children's lives so that they are more likely to share that conception. Brian's parent cannot permissibly take Brian to the ground so that he flourishes as a fellow supporter. At best, parents may

²³ Clayton's later work offers another defence of his view that treats children's retrospective consent upon maturity as possessing similar moral weight to valid tokens of adult consent. This consent possesses moral weight due to the Rawlsian burdens of judgement: epistemic concerns arising from the reasonable pluralism that inevitably characterises free societies (Rawls 2005: 54-8). The curbing of this pluralism (e.g. by discouraging certain lifestyle choices) disrespects citizens as moral equals. This pluralism makes it difficult to predict which lifestyle choices any particular child will later affirm. Therefore, the requirement we respect citizens as moral equals requires: "...that children be treated in accordance with norms that will command their retrospective consent or at least that will not retrospectively be rejected." (Clayton 2012: 355). See also Clayton 2014. Clayton's argument faces two significant problems: First, as Paul Bou-Habib and Serena Olsaretti (2014: 25-6) suggest, retrospective consent permits more intentional shaping than Clayton suggests. Children can reject much of the *content* of their upbringing while still appreciating the affectionate and intimate *manner* in which they were raised. Retrospective consent will be more sensitive to whether a parent shows adequate concern for their child's upbringing than to whether a parent's actions correspond to the requirements of anti-perfectionism. Second, as Brighthouse and Swift (2014: 157) argue, the normative weight of retrospective consent may provide reasons *for* intentional shaping because it may be better for children to reject their parents' values from a position of experience and understanding rather than ignorance.

participate in the activities associated with their conception of the good with their children for public reasons and hope their child will come to share their conception independently. Brian's parent must mimic Alice's parent and hope for the best that Brian becomes a fellow supporter. This is an emaciated form of affectionate intimacy. It lacks a mutual attachment formed on the reasonably controversial belief in the inherent value of cricket.

How many families will likely flourish under parental anti-perfectionism is an empirical question. What this section has argued is that parents, children, and broader society risk losing out when the public reason constraint constrains affectionately intimate mutual attachments on reasonably controversial grounds.²⁴ Understanding the risk of this potential loss of flourishing is the first step in rejecting parental anti-perfectionism. In the next section I argue political liberals do not need to take this risk.

Before continuing to this second step of the argument, a clarification is necessary. My approach so far resembles the approach taken by Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift in their defence of child-rearing practices and institutions that realise distinctive familial relationship goods while respecting liberty and mitigating conflicts with equality (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 4). They propose a much larger theory constructed around a dual-interest account of the family. Parental rights over children are justified by appeal to the interests of children. These interests are physical, cognitive, emotional, and moral development within an enjoyable childhood environment (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 64). Child well-being is profoundly dependent on, and vulnerable to, the actions of others. Children lack a well-developed and stable distinctive conception of the good but can develop to realise

²⁴ Clayton (2014: 138-40) accepts parental anti-perfectionism risks this form of constraint. This objection to parental anti-perfectionism avoids the weaknesses of the *childhood goods* objection to parental anti-perfectionism by factoring in both the effects and the justification of value shaping. The childhood goods objection argues parental anti-perfectionism prevents children from enjoying certain activities that are particularly valuable for children (Macleod 2010b). This objection overlooks how parental anti-perfectionism only prevents parents from intentionally encouraging children to enjoy these goods for reasons that cannot be publicly justified (Clayton 2014: 136-8).

their own interests (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 62). The familial relationships within which these rights exist are justified in part by the interest that adults have in the fiduciary role of parenting (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 54; Brighouse and Swift 2014: 110). Parents have scope to interact with their children to facilitate the realisation of the familial relationship goods that justify the family (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 118). Therefore, parents and children together have weighty interests in a particular type of intimate-yet-authoritative relationship that may result in the limited conferral of advantages to children and the broader shaping of children's values (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 50; Brighouse and Swift 2014: 150).²⁵

The resemblances that most concern us here are with Brighouse and Swift's claims about value shaping. They argue that parents have an obligation to shape their child's values for the child to participate in a just society independently of the parent's own values. Parents also have a limited right to shape their child's values to reflect their own commitments (Brighouse and Swift 2018: 392). This right extends to both spontaneous and deliberate value shaping (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 153-155.). Interactions of both sorts foster familial relationship goods. Parents and children should share values rather than parents transmitting all their commitments to their children at the cost of a child's autonomy. They criticise Clayton's parental anti-perfectionism as too costly in terms of familial relationship goods and accept that their account may be "mildly perfectionist" (Brighouse and Swift 2014: 170; Brighouse and Swift 2014: 178).

There is much to commend in Brighouse and Swift's position. However, the resemblance between our positions is not total. Although they defend the permissibility of value-shaping on the basis of flourishing and object to the costliness of parental anti-perfectionism, they are reluctant "to be cast as flag bearers for perfectionism" (Brighouse

²⁵ See also Brighouse and Swift 2014: 119-120; Brighouse and Swift 2014: 128-9; Brighouse and Swift 2014: 132.

and Swift 2018: 389).²⁶ Recent clarifications suggest (i) that the set of interests that legitimately contribute to familial relationship goods can be narrowly conceived of as a child’s “neutral interests” that may not violate an anti-perfectionist constraint (Brighthouse and Swift 2018: 390), (ii) the most perfectionist elements of the familial relationship goods argument concerns the interests of adults in the right *to* parent rather than the rights *of* parents over children (Brighthouse and Swift 2018: 391), and (iii) acceptance that deliberate reasonably controversial value-shaping may not be necessary for loving familial relationships.²⁷ These clarifications reinforce Brighthouse and Swift’s reluctance to defend *non-spontaneous deliberate value-shaping on perfectionist grounds*.

My argument from affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment does not share this reluctance. Rather, it embraces perfectionism and argues that deliberate value-shaping should not be prohibited for *solely* anti-perfectionist reasons. These reasons, and the public reason constraint they support, are unsuitable for determining the legitimacy of parental relationships. We have reason to value the flourishing found in affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment, and so we should broaden our understanding of permissible flourishing within families. My argument appeals to the values put at risk by the public reason constraint to support broader permissions for deliberate value-shaping on perfectionist grounds according to these values.

3. How to Restrict Perfectionism in Upbringing

²⁶ For objection that Brighthouse and Swift’s perfectionist commitment to human flourishing is “somewhat provisional and fraught”, see Sypnowich 2018: 319.

²⁷ “Just as, on our view, parents can enjoy loving familial relationships with their children without acting on their entirely natural desire generally to confer (unjustly advantageous) benefits on them, so, perhaps, they can enjoy such relationships without acting on their desire, perhaps also entirely natural, to try to get their children to endorse the same values as them.” (Brighthouse and Swift 2018: 394).

The risk posed by parental anti-perfectionism should not surprise us. It is the foreseeable consequence of a political constraint designed to govern non-intimate relationships that is poorly suited to the valuable affectionate intimacy or reciprocal vulnerability found within well-functioning parental relationships. Rawls (2005: 468) recognised this risk when proposing his unsatisfactory solution to the initial challenge posed by child citizens. In contrast to Rawls' own interpretation of political liberalism, the similarity argument extends anti-perfectionism into parental relationships. *Test Match* illustrates the costs of this extension. Something of special importance is lost when intentional value-shaping within affectionately intimate familial relationships is constrained in this way.

Parental anti-perfectionists might respond to the above argument with equanimity. After all, they offer clear reasons why the lost flourishing is illegitimate. While political liberals may sympathise with this loss of potential flourishing, they are unlikely to reject parental anti-perfectionism for this reason alone. Illegitimate losses should not undermine legitimate constraints. Further argument is needed to explain why political liberals should be moved by these losses. Let us now turn to this task.

First, consider how both difference and similarity arguments distinguish between different age groups of citizens. This seems apt given the motivating concern of how liberals should treat child citizens. However, both arguments treat child citizens in an unsatisfactory manner. Contra Fowler, liberals should treat children as future citizens. Contra Clayton, this treatment risks significant costs to families. The source of this dissatisfaction is political liberalism's tendency to distinguish between different institutional functions rather than between different age groups. By distinguishing between age groups rather than institutional functions, both difference and similarity arguments combine public functions, such as education, with private functions, such as parenting, under the category of duties

owed to children. This combination is unwieldy and works against political liberalism's strengths as a primarily institutional account of political legitimacy.

Rawls' unsatisfactory solution to the initial challenge conceives of families as a distinctive institution serving important social roles but regulated indirectly like other private institutions. This conception creates the apparent dilemma for political liberalism - the private functions of families must be protected without diminishing the public importance of families. Both difference and similarity arguments struggle with this apparent dilemma because they adopt Rawls' conception of the family wholesale and inherit its flaws. Without disaggregating and reconceptualising the social roles of the family, political liberals remain trapped in a bind between acknowledging the important social effects of the family and acknowledging the specific demands of raising children within families.

Political liberals should reconceptualise the social roles played by the family to dissolve the initial apparent dilemma. This will give proponents of the similarity argument reason to reconsider their assumptions concerning the family. Reconceptualising the social roles of the family undermines the basis of the similarity argument and the reasons why proponents, such as Clayton, discount the flourishing derived from affectionate intimacy in cases of intentional perfectionist value-shaping.

The second step of the argument against the similarity argument is for political liberals to disentangle the social roles surrounding upbringing. In the next section I argue liberals can clarify and revise the moral division of labour between upbringing and education to call for perfectionism at home and anti-perfectionism at school. This argument echoes similar calls made by Blain Neufeld (2009: 48-49) and Andrew Franklin-Hall (2019: 387-388). Before outlining my argument in detail, a contrast with Neufeld and Franklin-Hall's different routes to a similar conclusion will provide useful context for the argument.

Neufeld calls for a division of labour between state responsibility for civic education and parental freedoms for upbringing in line with reasonably controversial comprehensive doctrines. This call responds to G.A. Cohen's (2000: 134-147) objection to Rawls' basic structure. Cohen argues that Rawlsian principles of justice must either extend into social practices and personal choices that have profound effects on our lives (collapsing the basic structure restriction) or be restricted to coercive structures (on ultimately arbitrary grounds) (Cohen 2000: 139). In response to Cohen's objection, Neufeld seeks to defuse the arbitrariness charge by proposing a novel interpretation of the basic structure that includes institutions that have profound effects on all citizens. As these institutions apply to all citizens, reasonable persons would prefer these institutions be governed by mutually acceptable principles and recognise the need for coercive organisation and maintenance to ensure continuity over time (Neufeld 2009: 43). This "Legitimacy of Coercion" account of the basic structure requires that some aspects of childhood development be subject to state involvement, including the need for future citizens to be educated in the requirements of free and equal citizenship.

Franklin-Hall calls for a division of labour between state responsibility for integrating children into public life and parental responsibility for a child's initial moral orientation to comprehensive values. This call follows from his criticisms of Clayton's parental anti-perfectionism. Rather than appealing to the costs of political anti-perfectionism as I have, Franklin-Hall offers a more radical critique against the coherence and purported neutrality of anti-perfectionist upbringing itself (Franklin-Hall 2019: 378). He argues that an education for justice must possess comprehensive foundations and that parents remain accountable for the initial value-commitments that their children inevitably develop. The liberal outlook that children will tend toward developing under parental anti-perfectionism is thus less free-standing than it first appears. Institutional differences between families and schools explain why this result is more challenging for parents than teachers, requiring

liberals to strike a balance between parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism.

There is much to agree with in both Neufeld and Franklin-Hall's arguments, and it is cause for confidence that three different arguments lead to similar conclusions. Neufeld's call for a new division of labour stems from arguments concerning the basic structure. Franklin-Hall's call stems from a radical critique of Clayton's parental anti-perfectionism. My own call stems from a perfectionist argument for the value of affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment. These different strands of argument suggest an emerging "Divisionist" response to the apparent dilemma facing political liberals. The common theme to these strands is that while single institutions may appear problematic in isolation, the same institutions may be acting appropriately in relation to other institutions within a broader relational context. We must consider both the principles governing individual institutions as well as principles governing the division of labour between institutions. Reconceptualising the social roles served by both families and schools *together* promises to help answer some of the objections facing the family within political liberalism.²⁸

4. Parental Perfectionism and Pedagogical Anti-Perfectionism

We have seen that Rawls conceives of the family as serving important public social roles and seeks to regulate it indirectly as a private institution. This created the apparent dilemma we are seeking to resolve. Underlying this apparent dilemma is a binary assumption that power is either political (like the basic structure) or associational (like private institutions). The family is distinct from either category and forcing it into one creates the apparent dilemma. Political liberals should reject this binary assumption and take more seriously

²⁸ I thank Ben Colburn for emphasising this.

Rawls' (2005: 137) underdeveloped suggestion that familial relations are qualitatively distinct power relations: "The political is distinct from the associational, which is voluntary in ways that the political is not; it is also distinct from the personal and the familial, which are affectional, again in ways that the political is not."²⁹ Familial relations are characterised by different values, norms, and obligations than voluntary associations or public institutions.

We can develop this suggestion by clarifying and revising the social roles the family legitimately serves. Rawls assigns the family three roles - ensuring justice across generations, establishing a sense of justice in children, and reproducing cultural norms to help secure stability. Liberals should design their institutions so that families are not required to lead in all three roles. Rather, families should take the lead in the first social role and work alongside schools in the second and third social roles. Liberals should strike a balance in these second and third roles – sometimes families will take the lead constrained by educative requirements, sometimes families and schools will work in tandem, and sometimes families will provide domestic support while schools take the initiative. Families should not serve all three social roles on their own. Clarifying and distributing the social roles in this manner lessens the burden on families and permits the possibility of parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism.

To see this division of labour in practice, begin by considering parental perfectionism and the first social role – ensuring justice across generations. Parental perfectionism is not the rejection of *any* principled limits on intentional value-shaping within parental relationships. Traditional liberal arguments in favour of personal autonomy prohibit parents from inculcating their children with harmful views at the exclusion of other ways of living (Lotz 2013: 255). Parental perfectionism is instead the more modest claim that anti-perfectionist

²⁹ See also Rawls 2001: 165.

constraints should not apply to the parenting of children (Clayton 2014: 123-5). It does not entail the needlessly controversial claim that children must be raised in a reasonably controversial manner. Children should be raised in a just manner properly sensitive to childhood vulnerability and the benefits of affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment within parental relationships. Parental perfectionism grants parents qualified rights to raise their children in such a manner, consistent with their self-regarding duties and traditional liberal duties owed to third parties.³⁰ This right is compatible with a broad range of family structures and caregiving relationships found across contemporary pluralistic societies.

Parental perfectionism is well suited to helping the family serve the first social role. This role motivates contracting parties to consider future citizens in the initial situation of equality required by Rawls' contractualist methodology. Rawls derives his principles of justice from the hypothetical choice situation named the Original Position.³¹ Rawls (2001: 17) believes this choice situation suitably models our convictions about fair conditions of agreement between free and equal citizens and the appropriate reasons concerning principles of justice. The family provides the model for Rawls' (1971: 128) motivational assumption for justice between generations within this hypothetical choice situation. Contracting parties are assumed to be motivated by a sense of good will stretching over at least two generations. This allows the interests of different generations to overlap and provides a motivational bridge between contracting parties in the original position and the interests of future generations.

Parental perfectionism supports this motivational assumption. The values of affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment emphasised by parental perfectionism allow familial

³⁰ Self-regarding duties include duties to live a dignified life. Traditional liberal duties owed to third parties include duties against inflicting disproportionate harm (Clayton 2014: 124).

³¹ The aim of this choice situation is to "...define the principles of justice as those which rational persons concerned to advance their interests would consent to as equals when none are known to be advantaged or disadvantaged by social or natural contingencies." (Rawls 1971: 19).

relations to motivate parties to consider intergenerational justice.³² Therefore, it is sensible for political liberals to continue to rely on the family to play this motivational role.

However, parental perfectionism is not compatible with political liberals continuing to rely on the family to take the lead in the remaining social roles - establishing a sense of justice in children and reproducing cultural norms to help secure stability. The diversity of reasonably controversial comprehensive conceptions of the good that may shape a child's life under parental perfectionism may cause difficulties for the family helping to establish a sense of justice or secure stability.³³ Parental perfectionism permits parents to raise children according to reasonably controversial comprehensive conceptions of the good. This broader permission raises traditional political liberal worries concerning pluralism and stability in the sphere of upbringing.

To be clear, these worries are not so weighty as to prevent families from contributing significantly to these social roles. Rather, political liberals face a trade-off here. If intentional perfectionist value-shaping is permitted then families cannot guarantee a sense of justice and stability on their own. This potential threat of instability is the cost of parental perfectionism.

This trade-off will not be too costly for political liberals so long as other institutions step in to help the moral development of citizens and the stability of society. Political liberals should permit anti-perfectionist civic education to help serve these roles. Families can ensure children live flourishing lives that are consistent with a just liberal society if and when schools educate children in a manner that fosters a sense of justice and stability without threatening domestic affectionate intimacy. The combination of parental

³² On the motivational role of love in Rawls' thinking, see Mendus 1999.

³³ These difficulties partly rest upon empirical questions concerning upbringing and stability. For empirical doubts, see de Wijze 2000: 276-278.

perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism can serve all three important social roles political liberalism requires.

The case for pedagogical anti-perfectionism relies on the similarities between politics and pedagogy and the differences between pedagogy and parenthood. Pedagogical anti-perfectionism does not threaten affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment as parental anti-perfectionism does because education is not as intimate as parenting. Successful education does not require the intimate reciprocal vulnerability well-functioning parental relationships require. Although teachers and students are regularly exposed to each other's views within a power relationship, the epistemic goals of pedagogy distinguish it from parenthood. Education and schooling more closely resemble political relationships than parenthood. Political liberals should accept affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment distinguish parenthood from politics and the absence of these values from education makes pedagogical relationships primarily public rather than domestic. As political liberals believe public power relations should be governed by anti-perfectionism, then they should accept pedagogical anti-perfectionism.

The public nature of schooling makes the public reason constraint appropriate to liberal pedagogy. Anti-perfectionist civic education distinguishes itself from perfectionist civic education in two important ways.³⁴ First, anti-perfectionist civic education is less demanding than perfectionist civic education across some dimensions. Perfectionist civic education helps children to flourish and is designed to foster comprehensive values, such as ethical autonomy, as ideals that may shape a child's life.³⁵ This aim is prohibited by

³⁴ Amy Gutmann (1995) and Eamonn Callan (1996; Callan 1997) argue perfectionist and anti-perfectionist accounts of civic education ultimately converge. For rebuttals of the convergence argument, see Davis and Neufeld 2007; Fowler 2011.

³⁵ "The full autonomy of political life must be distinguished from the ethical values of autonomy and individuality...as expressed by the comprehensive liberalism of Kant and Mill. Justice as fairness emphasises this contrast: it affirms political autonomy for all but leaves the weight of ethical autonomy to be decided by citizens severally in light of their comprehensive doctrines." (Rawls 2005: 78).

pedagogical anti-perfectionism. Reasonably controversial comprehensive values cannot justify anti-perfectionist civic education. Children are instead taught to be reasonable persons and citizens in a liberal society (Rawls 2005: 199-200). For example, they will learn about their constitutional and civic rights, important political virtues, public culture, and economic self-sufficiency. These civic aims do not require students to adopt any particular conception of the good. Questions of flourishing are left outside the classroom.

Second, anti-perfectionist civic education is more demanding than perfectionist civic education across other dimensions. While the goal of educating children to be reasonable citizens capable of fair cooperation is compatible with children coming to have their lives shaped by comprehensive liberal values, it does not require it. Rather, children must adopt a different stance toward comprehensive values by recognising what role they should legitimately play in liberal society. Anti-perfectionist civic education teaches children to respect others as free and equal, and to respect the burdens of judgement (Edenberg 2016: 187-206). It aims to achieve reciprocity while respecting reasonable pluralism. Perfectionist civic education does not require the latter.

Anti-perfectionist civic education teaches children concepts such as stability for the right reasons, overlapping consensus, and public reasoning. Children must understand the mechanisms of political liberalism and how reasonable citizens should perceive the “right fit” between their conception of the good and the demands of society (Tomasi 2001: 85-91). For example, children must come to understand the distinction between fundamental political matters and non-fundamental public questions of culture (Davis and Neufeld 2007: 66-7). These distinctive demands of pedagogical anti-perfectionism distinguish it from perfectionist civic education. A significant part of what makes pedagogical anti-perfectionism distinctive is what it asks of students, rather than what it permits. These features are important for liberals to endorse. They explain why pedagogical anti-

perfectionism is well suited to taking the lead in serving the second and third social roles (Waldren 2013).

The second social role families play is to aid moral development and act as the first school of moral education by helping citizens to develop a sense of justice. We can consider pedagogical anti-perfectionism's suitability for this social role by reflecting upon Rawls' three-stage account of moral development (Rawls 1971: 462-79).³⁶ The first stage of moral development – the Morality of Authority – is characterised by a family unit acting in accordance with a reasonable interpretation of familial duties as defined by the principles of justice. The next stage of development - the Morality of Association – is characterised by individuals complying with the moral standards appropriate to their roles within various intuitions. This is a broader stage of development. Accordingly, the role of the family shifts from the sole institution within which children develop a sense of justice to one institution among many, including schools, teams, community groups, etc. The final stage of development – the Morality of Principles – is characterised by citizens upholding a public conception of justice by acting justly and advancing just institutions. This is the broadest stage of development. As citizens come to appreciate the ideal of just human cooperation, their moral attitudes are no longer shaped by the contingencies of life within specific associations. They are instead guided by a desire to act from a conception of justice, developing a sense of civic justice as they do so.

The family must take the lead in the earliest stage of development due to the very values my argument emphasises. It is because families are sites of affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment that parents can raise children to begin to develop a sense of justice.

³⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion. There is debate over the continuing role of Rawls' account of moral development in his argument for stability within political liberalism (Rawls 2005: 140-144; Rawls 2001: 184-188). On this role, see Freeman 2007: 245; Weithman 2011: 293.

Our reasons to value affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment speak in favour of parental perfectionism governing the family's role in the morality of authority.³⁷

However, the first school of moral education need not remain the leading school of moral education beyond this earliest stage of development.³⁸ The morality of authority primarily concerns our early understanding of the *nature* of obligations and the *importance* of complying with them for non-instrumental reasons, rather than determining the *content* of our obligations. The lessons we learn during the earliest stages of moral development are subsequently shaped by and balanced against competing factors encountered in later stages of our moral development. Beyond the morality of authority, families become one important institution among many guiding our moral development. The distinctive character of pedagogical anti-perfectionism outlined above makes it well-suited to helping citizens navigate the demands of these institutions and develop a broader sense of justice compatible with political liberalism. Therefore, parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism can together serve the second social role.

The final social role assigned to the family concerns stability. Rawls (2001: 162-3) requires families to raise and care for children, as well as ensuring their moral development and education into wider culture by providing them with a sense of justice and the political virtues that support just political and social institutions. The second social role concerned children's moral development and sense of justice. The third social role concerns families transmitting the social norms required to maintain a stable and enduring society. These norms are supported by political virtues such as civility, tolerance, reasonableness, and fairness (Rawls 2005: 194-5).

³⁷ Franklin-Hall (2019: 379-381) argues the earliest stages of education for justice must have comprehensive foundations. This suggests the morality of authority and parental perfectionism are inseparable.

³⁸ Rawls (1971: 467) acknowledges the morality of authority is primitive and temporary.

Political liberals might object that parental perfectionism is poorly suited to this social role as it prevents families from perpetuating society in a stable manner. This worry should be discarded once we recognise the divisionist account of moral development I offered above. Parental perfectionism supports the central role the family must play in the earliest stage of moral development. Significant stability threats will only arise if families continue to monopolise this prominent position in later stages of moral development. Parental perfectionism does not require families to monopolise in this manner. Parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism both have important roles to play in the later stages of moral development. The morality of authority explains how families initiate children's development of the political virtues alongside a sense of justice. Pedagogical anti-perfectionism suggests educational institutions have as large, if not larger, legitimate role to play in demonstrating the importance of these political virtues to stability in subsequent stages of moral development.

Pedagogical anti-perfectionism educates students to become reasonable citizens in a politically liberal society by explaining the legitimacy of its constraints and helping citizens to negotiate their domestic and public obligations. Such an education will temper the reasonably controversial commitments parental perfectionism permits parents to intentionally pass on to their children within familial relationships. Children will be better equipped to recognise the comprehensive nature of these commitments and to reasonably respond to them. Pedagogical anti-perfectionism has broader appeal than perfectionist civic education, with subsequent stability gains for liberal society (Costa 2004: 8). Again, therefore, parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism can together serve the third social role and answer the stability objection.

Critics may object the division of labour I have re-drawn between politics, education, and parenting is artificial. I have suggested parental perfectionism characterised by affectionate

intimacy and mutual attachment can provide motivational assumptions for intergenerational justice and guide the earliest stage of moral development, while pedagogical anti-perfectionism can guide citizens through subsequent stages of moral development and help ensure social stability. However, practices such as home-schooling put the division of labour I have offered under significant pressure by pitting a parent's familial relationship against their educational role.³⁹ Some parents may choose to home school children *in order* to maintain affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment.⁴⁰

This is an important challenge for divisionist arguments to consider as they are developed and refined.⁴¹ My response here is somewhat tentative: I believe that the pressure facing the division of labour I propose is not insurmountable. The combination of parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism permits home-schooling compatible with affectionate intimacy between parents and children and does not prevent children from being raised according to the demands of anti-perfectionist civic education. Meeting these requirements requires home-schooling parents to navigate the different moral demands of parenting and schooling. Navigating these demands will be difficult. Consequently, state support for home-schooling practices and parents navigating their differing responsibilities should be provided as part of the package of policies supporting childhood upbringing and education.

Impermissible forms of home-schooling are those that directly threaten the affectionate intimacy between parents and children or that fail to satisfy the aims of anti-perfectionist civic education. Where the balance between parental perfectionism and pedagogical anti-perfectionism is impossible to strike, suitable alternatives to home-schooling are required.

³⁹ On the challenges of home-schooling, see Reich 2002.

⁴⁰ I thank Matthew Clayton for helping to develop this objection.

⁴¹ For example, boarding schools requiring educators to adopt limited parental responsibilities offer similar challenges.

Parents cannot use home-schooling to shield their children from the demands of liberal citizenship (Quong 2011: 301-5). Such an aim is illegitimate against a background requirement for anti-perfectionist pedagogy.⁴²

Political liberals should be confident this division of labour between parenting and schooling is compatible with a range of caregiving relationships and educational arrangements. This compatibility should “sweeten the pill” of parental perfectionism by reducing some of the potential risks it poses to political liberals. Pedagogical anti-perfectionism can plausibly constrain and counterbalance the supposed vices of a parental perfectionism.

5. Conclusion

Those working in debates over education, upbringing, and political legitimacy should understand what liberals owe child citizens. Toward this end I have argued perfectionism can be plausibly restricted to parenting and is compatible with anti-perfectionism in education. To defend this claim I rejected two prominent liberal arguments concerning the legitimate treatment of adult and child citizens. Both the difference and similarity arguments are inferior to a third divisionist argument that disentangles the social roles political liberals require the family to serve and distributes them across homes and schools. The important contributions affectionate intimacy and mutual attachment make to our flourishing in the domestic sphere explain the need for parental perfectionism. The absence of affectionate intimacy from civic education and the important role education plays in social justice and political stability explains the need for pedagogical anti-

⁴² “Justice as fairness honours, as far as it can, the claims of those who wish to withdraw from the modern world in accordance with the injunctions of their religion, provided only that they acknowledge the principles of the political conception of justice and appreciate its political ideals of person and society.” (Rawls 2001: 157). See also, Freeman 2007: 238.

perfectionism. For these reasons liberals should support anti-perfectionism in schools and perfectionism in the home.

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