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A philosophical analysis of filial obligations

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Rice University, 1994
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A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF FILIAL OBLIGATIONS

by

SARAH VAUGHAN BRAKMAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

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ABSTRACT

A Philosophical Analysis of Filial Obligations

by

Sarah Vaughan Brakman

Filial obligations are moral requirements that adult children have for the well-being of their parents. These obligations are non-voluntary special obligations. An examination of selected cultural (classical Greek and imperial Chinese), religious (Judaic, Islamic and Christian) and philosophical (Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hobbes and Locke) views concerning filial obligation is provided.

Several candidates emerge for the basis of filial obligations. An analysis of the arguments for each of these candidates is provided. Personal identity is rejected as an inadequate basis for filial obligations because it relies on a fallacy. Friendship is rejected because 1) there are morally relevant features of the filial relationship that are not captured by this account and 2) the lack of equality of autonomy and the lack of independence make friendship between children and parents impossible. Reciprocity is rejected when it is shown 1) that the motive of parents for benefiting children is morally irrelevant on a reciprocity account and 2) that the requirement of the repayment of debts is damaging to the parent-child relationship.

Gratitude is supported as the basis of filial obligations because it does not fall
prey to the inadequacies listed above. In addition, it addresses all features held to be important to the structure of the parent-child relationship. The argument defended is adult children whose parents have intentionally, voluntarily and benevolently benefitted them for their own sake, have an obligation to cultivate attitudes that are constitutive of the virtue of gratitude. The virtue of gratitude includes the dispositions of appreciation and goodwill. Filial obligations require that one act according to the possession of such attitudes.

Application of the gratitude account of filial obligations to cases shows that the specific content of the obligation is context-dependent and cannot be determined across cases. This finding strengthens the argument for gratitude as the basis of filial obligations as it may be applied to our pluralistic society without undermining the values and customs for a particular community.
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Finally, I wish to acknowledge my husband, James Maurice Youakim, M.D. From conceptual critique, to editing chores, to library searches, to warm, nutritious meals and clean laundry, Jim has made every type of contribution possible to this work. His enthusiasm for the project was outstripped only by his love for me, both of which made my work easier and my life happier and more complete. The victory shared is so much sweeter!
DEDICATION

To the Memory of
Joseph Raoul Octave Morel

Being his friend was a privilege, being his
granddaughter was a blessing.
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CHAPTER ONE

MORAL OBLIGATION AND FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Care of the elderly is both a social and a personal issue. It is a social issue because there is a shortage of long-term care facilities, programs, and assistance for the ill elderly. More care and more money are needed for an already over-burdened economy and national budget. It is a personal issue because everyone is someone's child, and today the majority of grown children have at least one parent still living. Due to this public shortage of available resources, the commitment of personal resources is much greater in a time when there are more elderly, fewer adult children to care for them, and fewer personal resources.

Much attention is focused these days on the first of these problems, the public issues, as a way to relieve the private burdens of families. My interest, however, is centered around the second problem concerning the commitment of resources within families. Most people feel a special sense of responsibility for their parents. The question that I am interested in asking is whether there is an obligation to parents held by adult children? If there is such an obligation, why is there an obligation, when does it hold, may it ever be foregone, and finally, what does it oblige children to do? Is it a culturally or socially conditioned response, or does it have moral grounding? To what kinds and to what amounts of care does filial obligation commit us? What about the
situations in which, due to limited time and resources, caring for one's parents conflicts with caring for one's children; can we determine who ought to come first?

The goal of this dissertation is to provide a philosophical analysis of the foundation and nature of filial obligation. Filial obligations are requirements of children to act for the best interests of their parents. These can be understood as legal, social (or cultural), and/or moral requirements. Usually, and for our purposes, "filial obligation" refers to the obligations that grown or adult children have towards parents. This definition, however, raises more questions than it presumes to answer: 1) Is there an 'obligation' to perform particular acts for one's parents and is this necessarily a moral requirement? 2) By virtue of what is a person someone's child or someone's parent? 3) If such an obligation does exist, what is it and what is its justification(s)? 4) How should the obligation be discharged and what acts should be performed? In this first chapter, I will discuss those issues raised by questions 1 and 2. In Chapter Two, I will present a truncated historical survey of the concept of filial obligation as understood by major Western cultural traditions and one non-Western tradition. I will also include a historical examination of the concept from previous philosophical perspectives. In Chapter Three, I will use the work of the previous chapter as a springboard for the analysis of issues raised by question 3; what are the arguments for the various candidates for the foundation, or source, of filial obligations. In Chapter Four, I will attempt to answer question 4 by examining the source of filial obligation to help define the extent, limitations and form of the obligation itself.
I. Obligations

In this section, I will discuss what is meant by the concept "obligation" and why I think that this is the appropriate way to think about filial morality.

I begin with what it means to have an obligation or a duty. In everyday usage, these two terms have been used interchangeably to mean roughly the same thing. Philosophers such as Moore, Ross and Prichard have thought that "duty", "obligation", "wrong not to", and "ought" were all terms that expressed the same idea. However, as Brandt points out, there have been (and still are) philosophers who think that by not making distinctions between these expressions, we not only ignore "distinctions that ordinary language makes", but that such attitudes may lead to the graver situation of "confusions and oversights of substance." Hart claims that duty and obligation are "jointly distinctive" from right and ought in three ways: a) the content of both depend on the practice and code of an agent's group; b) the conduct need not be fixed by the nature of an act; and c) the force of the obligation or duty is coercive. Second, Hart claims that the difference between obligation and duty is that obligations, unlike duties, may be voluntarily assumed or made. Duties exist as a result of a person's position, status or role. Further, obligations are owed to special persons whereas duties are more generally owed.

I disagree with Hart's distinction that obligations but not duties may be voluntarily assumed. There are obligations that are not voluntarily assumed, such as our obligation to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves, and conversely that there exists duties which are voluntarily assumed such as our duty to obey traffic laws if we choose to
drive. It seems that the differences that Hart claims between obligation and duty are primarily ones of ordinary language usage. If we wish to communicate the sense of a requirement on actions, it seems that there is no danger of conceptual confusion with using these terms interchangeably. In this analysis, then, I will use the term "obligation" to mean either obligation or duty unless I am referring to or discussing another's view who holds that the distinction between duty and obligation matters for his or her argument.

An obligation is a social, legal or moral requirement placed on an agent's actions which limits an individual's freedom to act either by a (social, legal or moral) requirement to act or by a (social, legal or moral) requirement to forego acting in a given situation. It is important to understand that 'limited' in this sense refers not to any physical or psychical decrease in capability, but rather to the proscriptions that morality or the law places upon an individual's behavior. The action is required because there exists some (social, legal or moral) pressure or coercion to perform or refrain from performing it. All obligations, in addition to the character of being required, have the following characteristics in common: a coercive element to ensure performance and punishment and/or compensation owed when a failure to perform occurs. To fail to meet an obligation means that an individual's behavior is open to censure and that she is held accountable for this failure (blameworthy).

But how do these requirements come into being? On what are they based? Social obligations are conventions which are created and enforced in individual societies by the members of the society which impose certain demands on individuals from the others.
These requirements are known to the members of the group and there exists pressure from the other members of the group that encourages performance over non-performance. When an individual fails to meet his social obligations, there are appropriate and approved ways in which that person is censured or "punished" for his behavior. Legal obligations are requirements that are created in individual societies by the given body of law to which that government adheres. All the members of the society know the law and therefore their legal obligations under that law. These obligations are enforced by the governments through the court system. Respect for the law, fear of punishment and other more subtle pressures keep individuals from failing to meet their legal obligations. When an individual fails her legal obligation, she is subject to punishment through fines or imprisonment. Likewise, moral obligations are attended by analogous coercive and punishment elements. If a person has violated or failed an obligation, no matter which type, she must experience regret and will be expected to perform or give some kind of compensation in return. With moral obligations especially, there is a special sense of distress when an obligation is not met. This is not merely the kind of regret that we feel when we are not able, for whatever reason, to do something, but rather it is more the uneasiness, guilt and discomfort that a person experiences when she fails to do what she knows is not merely expected of her, but required of her.¹⁰

A major claim of this analysis is that filial obligations are moral obligations. In Chapter Two it will be shown that different societies have emphasized filial responsibility at different stages in history. Performing actions for the benefit of one's parents appears to be intuitively more than the creation of social convention however. Filial obligations
meet the valuative criteria for moral obligations, that is, failure to perform a filial obligation results in moral disapprobation and performance of a filial obligation may result in moral approval and praise. This seems to always be the case when discussing filial obligations, while it is only sometimes true that failure to meet filial obligations deserve social disapproval or legal sanction.\textsuperscript{10}

The theory of moral obligation that I assume here has been called the institutional theory of duty.\textsuperscript{11} On this view, duties and obligation are "commitments deriving from laws, assigned tasks, social roles, status, etc.," and they "impose upon us certain minimum demands from others which we cannot ignore without being liable to penalty or punishment."\textsuperscript{12}

Having an obligation differs from saying that an agent ought to perform or refrain from performing an action. A person may ought to do something that she has no obligation to do, perhaps because the action is expected or would merely be a nice thing to do in polite company.\textsuperscript{13} In other words, it may be an ‘ought’ because of social convention but it may not be a moral obligation. Likewise, a person may have an obligation to do something that, all things considered, she ought not to do.\textsuperscript{14}

It is important to appreciate that the concept of obligation, however, does not capture the whole of morality. Whatever scheme of morality that one espouses (utilitarianism, Kantianism, intuitionism, etc.), obligation fits into a taxonomy, or as some think, a hierarchy, of morality. While there are actions that it is an agent’s duty to perform, there are also actions which are morally neutral; actions to which morality is indifferent, such as which shirt to wear, whether to take the stairs or the escalator, etc.
In addition, there are also actions which morality (whatever one’s conception) deems are wrong or impermissible, i.e., the deliberate killing of innocents. But what about the individual who saves a drowning person at considerable risk to her own life? What about the individual who dedicates her whole life to the service of the poor? People who, strictly speaking, are not doing their duty (and therefore are not performing actions of obligation) but whose actions also seem out of place in the category of the simply morally permissible which encompasses simple favors and questions of social etiquette. Some philosophers have criticized the conception of morality that says there are only duties, permissible, and wrong actions for precisely the reason that it cannot account for the actions of the moral ‘hero’ and the moral ‘saint’. These actions which are known to be "above and beyond the call of duty" are called "supererogatory." They are as special type of morally permissible actions because they are not morally neutral but rather morally praiseworthy.

An argument that this analysis addresses is whether filial responsibility is not better understood as supererogatory actions rather than obligations -- meaning, are such actions, morally speaking, nice to do but not required? The work of this analysis as a whole is to argue for filial responsibility as a moral obligation and not merely as acts of supererogation. The majority of this argument will be presented in Chapters Three and Four.

II. Types of Obligations

In this section, we will discuss types of obligations in order to show where filial
obligations fit in the taxonomy of obligations.

Moral obligations may be classified as general obligations and special obligations. General obligations are owed by all persons to all other persons. These are the obligations that are incumbent upon entities worthy of moral respect to other such individuals. They do not depend on any particularizing feature of an individual. Examples of general obligations include, saving a drowning baby in a tub of water, not harming those who are not harming us, etc. Special obligations, in contrast, are those that an individual owes to another particular individual because of some history of a relationship between them. According to D.W. Ross, examples of special obligations include duties which exist due to previous acts of mine and duties which exist due to previous acts of others.

These [special obligations] may arise, in the first place, incidentally, from acts which were not essentially meant to create such an obligation, but which nevertheless create it. From the nature of the case such acts may be of two kinds—the infliction of injuries on others, and the acceptance of benefits from them. It seems clear that these put us under a special obligation to other men, and that only these acts can do so incidentally. From these arise the twin duties of reparation and gratitude. And finally there are special obligations arising from acts the very intention of which, when they were done, was to put us under such an obligation. The name for such acts is ‘promises’; the name is wide enough if we are willing to include under it implicit promises, i.e. modes of behaviour in which without explicit verbal promise we intentionally create an expectation that we can be counted on to behave in a certain way in the interest of another person.\(^\text{16}\)

Filial obligations are special obligations. Due to the relationship between parent and child, the child owes duties to the parent. This may be because the parent performed services for the benefit of the child without the child’s consent (caretaking) or it may be due to the fact that the parent caused the child to exist (biologically or personality).\(^\text{17}\)
Special obligations may be divided into two types. One of these is that of promising. A person has a special obligation to another person if there exists a promise between them. The second type is known, alternatively, as "status,"18 "positional,"19 or "institutional"20 duties. While each term is subtlety distinct from the others, they all refer to obligations that a person has in virtue of a particular role she occupies or function that she performs in some social system. For convenience and simplicity I shall use the term "status obligations." Feinberg states that obligations of status or position find their historical root in the feudal society where the serfs owed an obligation to their lords. A person has an obligation of status when her relatively fixed position in the social order carries with it duties that are defined by that role. Feinberg's analysis of status obligations is that they are not owed to anyone in particular, but rather to the person or thing that fulfills that role. Examples of this include obligations to a person's country or university.

Filial obligations appear to be status obligation. In this case, we would assume that it is in virtue of the role as child that a person finds herself with concomitant duties to those who are in the role of her parents. There is, however, a very interesting and important problem for our analysis concerning status duties.

While it is part of the definition of special obligations that they are moral obligations, the same is not always said about status duties. There are some philosophers, such as Simmons, who argue that status, or as he calls them, positional duties, are not moral duties. On this account, status obligations are not moral
obligations. To the extent that status obligations seem moral, they are then also fulfilling a non-status moral obligation concurrently. For example, Y accepts an appointment. Subsequently, she decides that she does not want to do the job and she does not perform the duties that are binding upon her as a result of holding this job. Is Y morally blame-worthy? We might say yes, but it is because Y broke faith with the organization. By accepting the job, she promised to discharge her obligations and she has broken the promise. The moral sanction, according to Simmons comes from breaking her promise not from failing to fulfill her status duties.

Simmons claims a distinction exists between moral duty and "positional" duty.21 An obligation for Simmons is a moral requirement that is voluntarily undertaken, owed by a specific person to another specific person or persons, generates a correlative right, and is determined by the nature of the transaction or relationships into which the obligor and the obligee enter (not by the nature of the required act).22 Only if the duty is voluntarily entered into does an "obligation" exist to perform the duty. Simmons states that there are moral duties (which he calls obligations) and status duties (though he claims that he is not assuming that they are mutually exclusive).23 Simmons defines natural duties as a type of moral duty which apply to all persons regardless of status or of acts performed.24 Positional duty is concerned with the tasks or performances which are intimately connected with some particular office, station, or role which an individual can fill. According to Simmons the role which an individual fills does not necessarily have to be part of an established institutional framework. While natural duties are moral requirements, "positional" duty need be no more than the consequence of an established
'requiring rule' in any institutional setting.25

Simmons argument that positional or status duties lack moral content is based on the premise that moral obligations are only possible when a relationship is entered into voluntarily. He argues for this latter claim, however, by providing a number of examples in which a usual feature - voluntary undertaking - is taken away. He then argues that since these cases are no longer moral without this feature, voluntariness is the crucial feature needed for an obligation to be a moral one. This argument is not convincing since it only deals with taking voluntariness out of situations. We can still conceive of situations in which voluntariness is not a usual feature to begin with and the status obligation is a moral one. Examples of this are, as Ross says, duties which rest on previous acts of others, such as obligations to benefactors. Perhaps the distinction ought not to be between promising and status obligations, but more precisely between voluntarily assumed and non-voluntarily assumed special obligations.

Honore however argues that a moral requirement does exist that is independent of whether it was voluntarily assumed and that is not a natural duty (i.e., all person to persons). He argues that this moral duty will be incumbent upon those who are in a special relation with one another, particularly because of this relation and regardless of whether or not they voluntarily entered into such a relationship. Honore states that in cases where there is this relationship, necessity may act as a ground of moral duty or obligation.26 There may be need for an individual, thing or institution to be cared for or supervised. In this case, there is a special duty, over and above the "natural" duty to help those in need, that may be imposed (even against her will) on the person who is
deemed to be suitable to render this care. Honore's argument rests on grounding the moral requirement in the relationship that exists between the parties. In fact, he gives as "obvious examples of an obligation grounded in necessity" those "arising from the family relationship."  

Honore's view is shared by Robert Goodin who also believes that the special relationship and the existence of necessity ground moral obligation. However, this view, like Simmons, is also not persuasive. It is not clear that necessity is a necessary condition for the existence of moral obligations in special relationships. Those in non-voluntary special relationships may still have moral obligations to a particular other, even if necessity is not present. Beneficiaries have obligations to donors even if the donor is not in need (e.g., god and country). The existence of non-voluntary special obligations which are moral obligations has not then been disproved. There is, though, the question that this analysis must address: Are filial obligations based on a particular conceptual grounding that is secured by the nature of the special relationship between the parent and child and if so, what is this grounding and what does it imply for the content and extent of such obligations? Before we address this central question, we must clarify the definitions of those who are the subject of this analysis.

III. Filial Obligations

Filial obligations concern what adult children owe to their parents. Since parents are the crucial party in this regard, it is important to explicitly state which people fulfill this role. Clarity is also important here because of the complex and changing nature of
parent-child relations and of the family structure in general. When we say that a person is a parent, we usually mean that the "parent" is the biological progenitor of the "child." In instances where this biological relationship is lacking, a person may be called a "parent" if she has been legally recognized as such. This is usually referred to as adoption. There are then two ways in which a person may become a parent: biologically or legally. All adoptive parents are legal parents and all legal parents are either adoptive or biological. However, not all biologically determined parents are legal parents. Some biological parents are no longer legal parents when they give up their children for adoption.

The biological determined parent is usually an individual who contributed genetic information (gamete) to the child through the act of sexual intercourse. However, with the advent of the new reproductive technologies, it is possible to be the gamete donor through other means than sexual intercourse, i.e. artificial insemination. It is also a practical possibility that a male and a female, Y and Z, may supply the gametes that fuse to form the embryo but that another female, Q, may carry the fetus for the nine month gestational period. Y, Z and Q all could be considered the biological parents of one child. This is the situation that is currently known as surrogate mothers.

Michael Hill holds the view that from an anthropological perspective, every society distinguishes three form of motherhood and three forms of fatherhood, the genetic, the gestational and the educational. He presents the following table:
Forms of Parenthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetic Father</td>
<td>Genetic Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(contributes sperm)</td>
<td>(contributes egg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitor</td>
<td>Genitrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(provides supportive environment for</td>
<td>(provides gestation and/or supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pregnant genitrix)</td>
<td>environment for pregnant genitrix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pater</td>
<td>Mater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(provides care and socialization of child)</td>
<td>(provides care and socialization of child)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hill states:

The forms of fatherhood, for example, can all be filled by one person. This result is assumed in the "ideal" independent conjugal nuclear family. The husband is the genetic father. As genitor, he nurtures and sustains his wife during her pregnancy. Finally, in the role of pater, he helps rear and socialize the young child. Thus, if we mistakenly assume that the independent conjugal nuclear family is the only natural family form, we are likely to erroneously conflate the various forms of fatherhood.32

This understanding allows for multiple parents. The implications of the new reproductive technologies for the traditional understanding of parents and of family is not clear. It is an issue that is currently being examined in philosophy and in the courts. It is an important, related issue to the one that I am looking at here, however, it is also beyond the scope of this analysis. I will limit the use of the concept of a biologically determined parent in this thesis to gamete donor (suspending discussion of the surrogate motherhood issue) because it is the sense of parent as "creator" that will be of interest and importance to this analysis.

If an individual is the legal parent of a child and is not a biological progenitor, it is usually the case that person is the adoptive parent of the child. An adoptive parent
is a person who has petitioned the court and has been granted under the law, the rights and privileges that normally are accorded to biological parents. There are however other forms of non-biological parent-like connections that are often grouped with adoption. The first is determining parenthood by foster parent status. A foster parent is a person who is granted the rights and obligations of parenthood on a temporary basis. Though this type of relationship seems similar to the adoption case, the inherent temporary nature of the relationship makes it legally, and perhaps morally, a more tenuous link than that of adoption. The second type of relationship is that of a stepparent. A stepparent is a person who has married the legally recognized (whether biological progenitor or adoptive) parent of the child. Stepparents stand on different ground legally and conceptually than either adoptive or foster parents. They do not go through a legal process specifically related to the child but rather become a "parent" through the legal process of marriage to the legally recognized parent. If the stepparent becomes separated from the legally recognized parent, then the stepparent’s rights are superseded by the rights of the legally recognized parent. The nature of the stepparent’s status is a little vague due to this indirect relation. Only if the stepparent adopts the child of his or her spouse does the stepparent’s rights and privileges, at least under the law, become equal with those of the "parent." Because the foster parent and the stepparent relationships have the additional aspects of temporary natures or indirect ties to the child, when I refer to non-biologically determined legal parents, I will usually mean those who are adoptive parents.

We might wonder at this point about those persons who do not fall under either category of legal parent, but who act like parents. What about the case, for example,
of a woman who brings an orphaned nephew into her home and raises him? What about a stepparent who provides a more loving and nurturing environment for a child than does the biological parent? These individuals appear to be performing the activities of parents but are not parents by definition. The activity of parenting is mainly that of caretaking. Caretaking means the provision of the essentials for human flourishing to those who are not yet (or who are no longer) able to secure these essentials for themselves. These include nutrition, adequate shelter, clothing, education and emotional support. To be an adequate parent means providing at least this form of care at some basic level for the development of the child.

Caretaking, however, as in the cases mentioned above, does not in itself establish the parent-child relation. The only ways, as I said earlier, in which a person becomes the parent of another person is by being the biological progenitor or the legally recognized parent. However, it is exactly the ability and desire to provide caretaking for a young person that is at issue when the courts decide to allow an individual to adopt a child. Correspondingly, it is usually the biologically determined parent’s lack of ability and/or willingness to provide adequate caretaking that results in the court’s determination to take away the biological parents’ rights and privileges as parents. While, then, caretaking is not necessary or sufficient for the definition of parent, it is in fact necessary to the act of being a parent. In other words, for an individual to have parental status, she or he must be able and willing to perform the duty of parenthood which is caretaking.

The definition of parent and child is not predicated upon the interpersonal
relationship (usually attended by affective states and love) between the individuals. Ideally, though, the parent-child relationship is thought of in terms of having both the formal, perhaps even institutional, connections that are captured by the two features discussed above, and the more intimate relationship which is born of the caretaking component, the act of parenting. The lack of affective ties does not in any way diminish the categorization of the individuals involved as "parents and their children." The interpersonal ties are not constitutive of the definition of parent and child but they do seem to be very important for the act of parenting.

I have shown then to whom I think filial obligations, if they exist, are owed. The distinction between biologically determined parent, legally determined parent and the duty of caretaking also is important for my forthcoming analysis. If, for example, I can show that the foundation of filial obligations rests on that of gratitude, then the person who provided caretaking will be the one to whom the obligation is owed. This will have interesting results since, as stated above, this person may not necessarily be a parent. Will filial obligations then have to be expanded to include those who are not parents but who provided caretaking? Moreover, a parent, then, may not necessarily be due any obligation. If, for example, the biological parent did not provide caretaking, then the biological parent has no claims to filial obligation. Conversely, if I prove that filial obligation is grounded in claims of identity (e.g., that I would not exist if it was not for my particular set of parents and their actions), then biological parents have claims to filial obligation whether or not they provided the caretaking and filial obligations, per se would not apply to adoptive parents or non-parent caretakers.
IV. Challenges to Filial Obligations

There are a number of arguments against the existence of filial obligations. These arguments, though different, all state that what is involved in filial concerns has little to do "obligations."

The first argument advanced against filial obligations is that it is not morality at all that is important for filial responsibility. Filial relations are characterized and/or determined by emotion and the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the parent and the child. In other words, an objection might be raised to using the language of obligation when discussing relations within the family. A relationship such as that of parent-child is usually defined by the affective states of love and affection. There is no need then to speak of obligation when adult children will attend to the needs of their parents because of this affective bond. However, as mentioned in the section on filial relationships, affective states are usually the products of the caretaking relationship which itself is not definitive for the parent-child relationship. There are then instances of the parent-child relationship in which these affective states are absent for whatever reason. Even in these cases though, we still think that there are some special claims adult children for the welfare or safety of their parents. The analysis of the possible foundations for what adult children owe parents provided in Chapter Three will make clear why this claim exists and when it is applicable.

Another response to the argument stated above is the following: even when an adult child-parent relationship is accompanied by the appropriate affective states, there may exist other equally special relationships that also are attended by equally close
affective states. If there is a limited resource, for example money or time, that two different people or groups to whom I am affectively attached and in special relationships with, require from me, I need to know whose needs should be met. An excellent example of this situation is the so-called "sandwich generation." When a person loves both her elderly parents and her children but her parents need money and her children need education and provisions, whose needs should she fulfill? Chapter Four will explore the extent of filial obligations in relation to other competing obligations, such as those to young children. We will discuss at that point, the reasons why there is something to say about the nature of this relationship in the abstract, but, that unfortunately, it is difficult to answer this query definitively for particular concrete situations.

The final challenge to filial obligations is the most strenuous. This argument does not deny the existence of obligations per se, but rather it questions the validity and relevancy of filial obligations in particular. It is the argument from intergenerational justice. The argument proceeds as follows: Historically, support of those less fortunate members of society was provided by the fortunate members and this was known as charity. As society grew, and industrialization brought changes in social values, charity was replaced by the more structured and impersonal mechanism of social justice. Likewise, the analogy proclaims, the notion of filial obligation has been replaced by the structured and impersonal mechanism of intergenerational justice. The major proponent of this view is Norman Daniels. Daniels makes some very strong points about the differences between time periods as the basis for the present irrelevancy of filial
obligations. First, a child's obligation to care for a frail parent were far less likely to be called upon at the turn of the century, since so few people lived to be the frail elderly. Second, when there were such obligations, they were burdensome over a much shorter period of time (because the life-span was shorter). And third, what burdens there were imposed, were more likely to be shared by a greater number of children per aged parent.\(^{34}\) Daniels also argues that, according to the philosophical dictum, "ought implies can", we cannot impose an obligation on people if they cannot fulfill it; there are fewer adult women at home now, there are complex parent-child relationships (stepchildren, etc.) and delayed childbirth makes the parents much older than in the past.\(^{35}\) According to Daniels, then, it did not cost us much individually to believe in filial obligations in the past, where as now that it is so difficult to manage we must take these burdens out of the home and have society deal with them in the larger, more impersonal form of intergenerational justice.

This response, though, does not address the issue that filial obligations may still exist, though perhaps harder to fulfill than in the past, or that the demands of such obligations may have changed even though the obligation itself remains. Daniels' response here does not counter the argument that filial obligations exist.

Daniels' major claims for not dealing with filial obligations are: 1) The appeal to filial obligations makes two mistaken assumptions; a) that we have a clear and useful sense of what such obligations involve and b) that filial obligations are an appropriate basis for public policy. 2) Determining what is just is the primary problem; it provides a framework within which we can then solve the problem of individual or family
responsibility.

Daniels says that we cannot base justice on filial obligations because we do not know what filial obligations are really and what they look like. Because we have not provided a systematic analysis before now of the concept of filial obligation does not mean that it is a shadowy philosophical notion. Also if the claim that filial obligations exist and have moral force independently of whether they function as the grounding for intergenerational justice stands, then Daniels’ arguments for intergenerational justice may stand independently of settling the question of filial obligations. In other words, the argument for intergenerational justice (not fully given here) can stand without denying the existence or moral relevancy of filial obligations.

In this chapter, filial obligations have been defined as the moral obligations that adult children have towards their parents. Filial obligations are non-voluntary special obligations. In order to secure fully the justification of filial obligations as moral obligations and to understand under what circumstances adult children have such obligations, in Chapter Two we will consider the views of filial obligations offered by selected major cultural, religious and philosophical traditions. We will give particular emphasis to the proposed conceptual foundations of filial obligations.
NOTES

1. "Resources" here include emotional, social, and physical, as well as financial. Later in this analysis I will specify when I intend to identify a particular type of resource.

2. This may or may not include obedience which is what is usually considered to be all that is required from children to their parents who have not yet achieved adulthood, or independence.

3. I am not, in this analysis, going to engage in any sustained metaethical discussion of the meaning of "obligation" or "duty," nor am I going to argue for the existence of such relations in general. I assume that obligations in the form of normative relations that require the performance of, or forbearance from, certain acts do exist.


5. Brandt, 374.


7. Brandt.


9. Christopher W. Gowans, "Moral Dilemmas and Prescriptivism," American Philosophical Quarterly 26(3) (July 1989): 187-195. Not all moral distress may be of the same kind since there seems to be a difference between moral distress as a result of weakness of the will or "improper deliberation" and moral distress as a result of not being able to meet an obligation because one had to meet another mutually exclusive obligation. Gowans calls this second kind of moral distress "justifiable moral distress."

10. Whether moral obligations are created by the society which adheres to them or whether they exist independently of anyone's subscription to them is a fascinating meta-ethical issue, but unfortunately, it is not a question that I am able to consider here. What I will consider is why it is that filial morality is captured by the concept of obligation and how we can determine, for a particular act, whether it is a filial obligation. There is of course the very interesting issue of how social and legal obligations reflect, are predicated upon, and/or enforce moral obligations. Again, this is a consideration that is beyond the scope of this analysis.


12. Peterfreund, 152.

14. See Gowans. This is especially true of the case of conflicting obligations. We will address this specifically in Chapter Four when we look at the situation of the "sandwich generation"- those individuals with obligations to both elderly parents and young children.


17. We will not treat the instance of the child who has in some way made a promise to perform certain acts for the parent because this would then be a straightforward case of the voluntary assumption of duties of fidelity.


21. Simmons adopts Hart's distinction between these two terms as conceptually defensible and technically correct. Simmons states, "I will adopt, following Hart, Rawls, and others, uses of 'obligation' and 'duty' which are paradigmatic in Brandt's sense" (p. 11). While Brandt defined what he meant by "paradigm" and "extended" uses of the terms, his conclusion is that there is not any significant conceptual difference between the two words -- such as the kind Simmons claims.

22. Simmons, 14-15.
23. Simmons, 12.
25. Simmons, 14.
27. Honore, 51.


31. Hill, 75.

32. Hill, 74.


34. Daniels, 24.

35. Daniels, 25.
CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

This chapter attempts a limited overview of the discussions of filial responsibility in major, cultural, religious and philosophical texts. To my knowledge, no work has systematically surveyed the views and arguments for filial obligations of different cultural and religious traditions. Such a project would be useful to my philosophical work because it might explain and clarify certain seemingly universal intuitions concerning the foundation and, subsequently, the content of filial obligations. This investigation is not intended to provide an exhaustive nor even complete account of the history of filial obligations, either within or between cultures and traditions. Our interest here is primarily twofold: first, a discussion of the views of the major cultural and religious traditions on filial obligation will add at least empiric evidence for my basic philosophical starting point, that filial obligations do exist. Second, and more importantly, this discussion is meant to look at the ways in which filial obligations have been justified or conceptually defended by these different traditions. Hopefully a set of possible candidates for the foundation of filial obligations will emerge. These will form the starting point for the discussion in the next chapter.

The section of this chapter which deals with the philosophical literature has been greatly aided by the work of Jeffrey Blustein in Parents and Children: the Ethics of the Family. Blustein traces the history of family relations and obligations in philosophy for
many of the same reasons that the work in this chapter is undertaken; to demonstrate that his concerns "have numerous philosophical precedents"; how his own arguments will relate to those that have been offered previously; and to provide a historical context for many of the assumptions he makes concerning the family and its internal relations. My concern is limited exclusively to the parent-adult child relationship. I discuss other familial relations only to the extent that they have bearing or relevance to filial responsibilities.

There are, though, two important differences between this work and Blustein's which makes this an advance. First, Blustein considers only the philosophical writings on familial relations, whereas this chapter includes the cultural and religious writings and beliefs as well. Cultural and religious traditions may be a source of rich reflection on this topic in a way that traditional writings in moral philosophy thus far have not. Additionally, given the special nature of these obligations and the assumptions concerning the nature of the parent-child relation that are made, it is important to more fully take account of the contexts in which many of the values surrounding filial obligations are imbedded. Second, he considers only Western views on familial relationships. By including the Chinese and Islamic traditions, I have included discussions of filial responsibility that do not have the same intellectual history and even methodology as those of the Western tradition. This provides, especially for the Chinese view, an altogether different way to approach and understand this interesting topic. Further, through the notion of inter-subjective agreement among various cultures, religions, and philosophers, this inclusion of non-western traditions brings even more (albeit of the negative argument type) evidence to bear on the assertion that filial obligations exist.
To focus the discussion in terms of the ends of this study - discovering the basis of filial responsibility and its nature and extent - each section will be organized into the following sub-sections: the source, the content, the extent (including whether the obligation depends to any degree on the quality of the parenting and how conflicts between filial obligation and other compelling special obligations are resolved), and finally the role of women as mothers and as daughters for filial obligations. In regard to the last subsection, I will say the following: All of these traditions and philosophical positions assume a hierarchical, patriarchal society. As such, the focus for a large part of the discussions of filial obligations are what sons owe their parents, with emphasis on what sons owe to their fathers in particular. For this reason, when such material existed, I have included a subsection that specifically addresses filial obligations and women. This is also why I use the masculine pronoun almost exclusively when discussing filial obligations in this chapter. For now, I ask the reader to reflect while reading this chapter on among other things, the interesting fact that all of these traditions assume a strong moral obligation of filial responsibility for sons, and yet in contemporary North American society, it is predominantly daughters who personally assume the specific duties of care-taking for parents.

One final note: In light of the analytic ends which this chapter is designed to serve, it is important to remember that, while no factual inaccuracies nor mis-rendering of traditions will be (should be) presented, broad strokes will be used to paint the overall tenets of the traditions discussed. In addition, it must be noted that this chapter is rich with opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons and analyses on many of the issues mentioned and discussed. Unfortunately, most of these will have to be foregone in this
work.

I. Cultural Traditions

A. The Classical Greek Tradition

The Greeks were ambivalent about old age. On the one hand, they hated it because of the many losses associated with it - loss of strength, usefulness, power and self-sufficiency. What is supported by all interpreters and historians of Greek social life, is the belief that old age is a disappointing and depressing state of being. For a society and people who greatly valued youth, vigor, and usefulness, old age was seen as a time of great loss. The old people of Keos drank hemlock at the age of sixty when they knew that their faculties were waning. The two reasons given for this are that they would not suffer from sickness and the weakness of extreme old age and that they would be praised for leaving enough for the young. Many dramatic pieces that have survived show that the old were ridiculed and derided.

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

The Greeks called the duty to assist one's parents "gerobokia" or "gerotrophia." If a child failed in gerobokia, he was liable to a fine and a partial deprivation of civil rights for having infringed a law established by Solon. The concept appeared to be considered a moral and a legal one. The moral basis appears to rely on some notion of reciprocity or indebtedness. This basis is offered on the basis of two strands of reasoning. First, evidence suggests that if a father had not performed the role of parents adequately, then the sons responsibilities to him were adjusted accordingly. A son was exempted from filial responsibilities if the father had not taught him a trade and thus
neglected his education.⁵

The Greek law-givers were accordingly most explicit in enjoining upon children the nurture and support of aged parents, who could otherwise expect little from the younger generation. The Attic law alone added a qualification, that the children were to be without responsibility if their parents had neglected to educate them.⁶

Bastard sons and those abused by their fathers (or with the father’s knowledge) were also exempted from filial obligation.⁷ The duty of children to care for parents seems then to be predicated upon the duty that parents have to bring up the children in a fitting manner and to train them to be useful and good citizens. This implies a reciprocity foundation of Greek filial responsibilities.

Second, it is also said that parents expected children to take care of them in old age and even the stronger claim is advanced that many had children, whether by biological parenthood or by adoption, so that they would be taken care of in old age.⁸ This gives further evidence to the understanding of the reciprocity basis of filial responsibility.

2. Content of Filial Obligation

The Athenian citizens at least had a legal as well as moral obligation to maintain their parents. Moreover, the Athenians felt that their first duty was to the parents who merited "honours on a par with the gods."⁹ At the time of Pericles, Lerat states,

A son’s first duty was to care for his parents in their declining years, and provide them with every necessity. A law promulgated in Delphi and partially preserved as an inscription, begins: 'If any person shall omit to provide for his father and his mother, he shall upon denunciation to the Council, be fettered and cast into prison until such time .....' (inscription breaks off: stone in broken)¹⁰

Taking care of one’s parents was considered part of being a good citizen and even public officers or orators were asked about their treatment of their parents.¹¹ Unfilial sons
were barred from public office. This is a very interesting punishment for it illustrates either (or perhaps both) that the Greeks believed that to be a good statesman, a person had to at least care about the people with whom he is most intimate or that such an example could be politically dangerous - leading to people neglecting old parents and the state having to take responsibility for their welfare.

A son's second duty concerns the performance of burial rites and rituals. Filial obedience was also prized in classical Greece: "I am now thirty years old, but I have never yet gainsaid my father in anything." "To get the better of one's father is shameful; yield to him, and you have the honour of victory."

The following legal prohibitions were proffered to children: "To strike a parent was a grave offense, or to refuse to maintain him in indigence, or to neglect the duty of burial. Injury to parents was one of the indictments which was referred to the archon and after a preliminary hearing, was brought before the courts". The Athenian law that stated that children should support their aged parents under penalty of law, stipulated the following conditions that counted as failure to take care of parents: "ill-usage, refusal of bed or of board and neglect of funeral rites". Diogenes Laertes reports that the penalty for the failure to provide any of these for one's parents was the loss of citizenship.

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

As stated above, filial responsibilities were negated if the parents, specifically the father, did not perform the basis duties of parenting, including food, shelter, and education. We can find no mention of more affective obligations to the emotional well-being of the child, which of course does not mean that such obligations did not exist.
4. Conclusion

Filial obligations for the Greeks consisted of maintenance and obedience in this life and honor after death for parents. It's force by law was predicated upon the premise that the parents had fulfilled their duty towards their children. This would seem to imply that the filial duties of the Greeks were based on some type of reciprocity argument. I will return to a discussion of this type of basis for filial obligations later in this chapter.

B. The Classical Chinese Tradition

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

The tradition of classical Chinese culture is based on the thought of Confucius. The respect of one's parents in Confucian (imperial) China was called "hsiao". This is loosely translated as filial piety. In a work that purports to be traced back to 400 B.C., The Book of Filial Duty (Hsiao-Ching: hereafter FD), Confucius is quoted as saying that filial piety is,

…the fountain whence all other virtues spring, and also the starting-point from which we ought to begin our education….Our body and hair and skin are all derived from our parents, and therefore we have no right to injure any of them in the least. This is the first duty of a child.

To live an upright life, and to spread the great doctrines of humanity a man must win good reputation after death, and reflect great honour upon our parents. This is the last duty of a son.

The first line gives the basic Confucian assertion, and it turns out, assumption: Filial piety, or devotion to parents - is the source of all other virtues. This can be understood by studying several critical concepts in Confucianism; tao and te, which are general ethical notions, and jen, li, and yi, which are three of the five constant virtues in Confucianism. Unfortunately, these have no direct translation into English, but an
approximation of what they mean can give a sense of this ethical system. 24

"Tao" refers to the general way of nature which is "the ideal way of life" for humans. It is similar to the idea of human excellence, in much the same way as Aristotle uses the idea of human flourishing. "Te" is a generalized concept meaning "ethical virtue". "Jen" is roughly equivalent to the virtue of benevolence, or the concern for the well-being of others. It has also been called "humaneness" [Smith (1983), p. 112]. Jen is the most important virtue that a person may possess according to Confucianism. Jen is not something that a person achieves; it is innate in all people. 25

Confucius tells us that jen means to "love men" (ai-jen), and Mencius equates jen with the innate goodness of man's nature, which he feels is manifest in the feeling of commiseration (ts'e-yin) in humans - the inability to bear (pu-jen) the suffering of others. 26

This means that Confucianism holds that all people are basically good. However, this can be clouded or subverted by external influences. A person's innate goodness, or jen, must be cultivated and encouraged. The way that jen is cultivated and actualized is through "chung" (doing one's best, or literally, "loyalty", to the state and to one's self) and "shu" (consideration of others, or reciprocity). 27 Together, these mean the cultivation of one's self through the service of others.

It is important to understand that jen only has meaning in concrete manifestations and has relatively no meaning when it is considered as a mere abstraction. We see jen operating in the various relations that an individual has to those around him. (We will return to this explanation below.)

The concept of "li" means something like "ritual propriety". Li implies the morality of following the established rules and regulations that govern everyday life. Li
is a virtue because the rituals are meant to purify oneself and to cultivate jen. "Yi", though, means "right behavior" apart from rituals.28 "Li" refers to the ethical injunction to follow rules and regulations and "yi" refers to the ability of individuals in certain situations not covered explicitly by li, to use their reason to determine what the correct action is. For example,

When queried as to what a person ought to do when his sister-in-law is drowning, in light of the li requirements that male and female are not to touch one another in giving or receiving anything, Mencius appeals to discretion rather than to rule compliance. This appeal has nothing to do with making an exception to a rule of proper conduct, but refers to one's sense of rightness in exigent situations. In light of yi, a rule may be judged to be irrelevant to ethical perplexity, not because it has no authoritative status, but rather because the li as a set of ritual rules are not intended to cover all circumstances of human life. It is yi that responds to ethical perplexities.29

Now, if as stated above, jen only exists in actualization, the question is through what or how is it actualized? Confucius believed that the root of jen is filial piety and through this virtue primarily, is jen manifested and cultivated by a person.

Filial piety is considered a paradigmatic virtue because, taken in the broad sense, it includes most other virtues, such as gratitude, loyalty, kindness, fairness and charity. It may also be extended to almost any other relationship because the Chinese social structure in general is characterized as a patriarchal and hierarchical one. This structure is best expressed by the "three bonds" (the san-kang): the Emperor to the subject, the father to the son, and the husband to the wife. The Emperor was the father of the Chinese nation and as such the subject should respect and obey him. The son respects the father; the wife respects the husband and, additionally, the younger brother respects the elder brother (virtue known as "ti").

So far, this discussion has only told us of the importance of filial piety for the
Chinese tradition and the fact that all other ethical concepts are in some way related to or founded upon it. What however, is the source or argument for this prominence of filial piety itself? This does not seem to be a question that Confucius or his immediate followers considered relevant. (Thus, bringing to our attention for the first time the basic difference between the eastern and western methodologies; The east does not "analyze", nor bring arguments to bear on their assertions.) Confucius thought it to be a "natural" fact and obvious point that filial piety exists. Why he thinks this could be attributed to "natural" fact is that everyone has parents and the parent-child relationship is rooted in biological nature. However, that children owe parents devotion based upon this relationship, and further, that this devotion is basic to all other virtues and ethical concepts is indeed not an intuitively obvious logical deduction. There is no argument to reconstruct for Confucius because not only does he not give one, but his world view implies that no argument is needed nor possible. Of course, if we went looking for some rational justification of filial piety we could find indications that because of their role as creator and care-taker in childhood, parents are considered to have some sort of property rights in their children, that children owe gratitude to parents, etc. In addition we could see that the positive duty that is required of a grown child to only do that which will reflect honor on one's parents, is based on the ancient Chinese thought and cultural tradition that the most important social unit was not the individual, but the family. The individual is always subordinate to the family, with the first and most important familial relationship being between the parent and child.

But these appear not to be foundational explanations for the Chinese. The analytical enterprise in general is literally speaking, "foreign" to this tradition.
Confucius did not argue for his philosophy. He proceeded from assumptions he thought natural facts. Perhaps his view could be understood as a type of moral realism by us.

It is not until the Han Dynasty, when the more cosmological oriented Buddhist and Tao philosophies were gaining popularity with rational accounts and explanations, that a man named Tung Chung-Shu attempted to give a cosmological account indirectly for filial piety: The Mind of Heaven gave three realms corresponding the three bonds between emperor subject, husband wife and parent child. These three are cosmic virtues with parent-child being the first. Still, this does not say why the parent-child relation is important, nor does it clarify the source of the moral status of the adult child-parent obligation. If anything, such an explanation would call for the obligation of parent to child to be paramount.

What the above tells us is the following: First, this particular project, a philosophical analysis of filial obligations, is an analysis based in the intellectual history and methodological assumptions of western civilization. Second, that even though we can not make sense of this section on the source of filial obligations, that Confucian assumptions concerning the existence and importance of filial obligations (piety) show us evidence of the seriousness and importance of the concept in general. Third, and most crucial, we may still find, as indicated above, argumentation for the content and extent of filial obligation that will be of use to the analysis in this chapter.

2. Content of Filial Obligation

What, however, is meant specifically by "filial piety"? Confucianism, as I said, is a virtue theory. It is as concerned with the agent's motivation for actions and his internal states as with the performance of proper acts. "If any one does not love his
parents, but others, he is a rebel against virtue; and if any one does not respect his parents, but others, he is also a rebel against the standard of rites. It is then, more than the performance of certain actions which is needed to be a "good" son. One should have certain attitudes and feelings concerning those persons who have been so good to him.

There are, though, in addition to these attitudes and intentions, specific actions which are required by filial piety. Obedience to parents was expected and required but it was not to be a blind obedience. In the Book of Rites, it is written, "When his parents are in error, the son must remonstrate with them with respect and gentleness. If they do not receive his reproof, he must strive more and more to be dutiful and respectful towards them till they are pleased, and then he must again point out their fault." It is important to read closely here to see that this passage does not advocate disobedience to parents in the least, but rather only that a child may and should attempt to help parents achieve tao. If parents require a specific action, however unjust or hurtful, the son must obey. There is no exception to the requirement to obey one's parents and indeed, there is no age limit for the child when obedience to parents is no longer required.

This, as shall be seen, is this most stringent understanding of filial obedience both in extent and in scope. The Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions all state that filial obedience is suspended when the parental command is counter to the accepted religious teachings and is lessen or nullified when the age of majority is reached. Most, if not all, of the philosophic positions also limit the extent of filial obedience and qualify its validity within a certain age bracket or state of dependency upon the parents.

In addition then to a positive willingness and obedience, The Book of Filial Duty
outlines exactly what a son should do for his parents. A son’s duties to his parents are clearly stated:

1. Venerate one’s parents in daily life.
2. Ensure the happiness of one’s parents in every possible way, especially when a meal is served.
3. Give extra care to one’s parents when they are sick.
4. Display the appropriate attitude and signs of great sorrow when one’s parents are dead.
5. Offer worship sacrifices to parents with the utmost solemnity.

Additionally, in his everyday life, a son should: 1) pay attention to every want of one’s parents, 2) serve the government loyally, and 3) establish a good reputation. All three of these fulfill filial duty. How the first two do so are obvious in light of the discussion above. The third is an injunction not to embarrass one’s parents and extended family. A large part of filial piety for the Chinese consists in a son looking and acting satisfied with his life and appearing humble even in wealth. A man can disgrace his family by being ostentatious. The book states, "Having thus wronged himself, he cannot be considered as a filial son, although he treats his parents everyday to luxurious meals." This emphasis on proper conduct in all aspects of one’s life as reflective of filial piety is a further indication of its extension and paradigmatic role for other virtues. Mencius, said, "Of services which is the greatest? The service of parents is the greatest....Everything [done] is a service, but the service of parents is the root of all others."

Attaining a good reputation as an example of filial obligation is yet a further indication of how very differently the Chinese culture viewed the role of the individual. Unlike the individualism of late nineteenth and twentieth century America which held that reputation should be maintained for the sake of individual pride and respect (the forms
that held reputation to be important at all), or even the Greek culture which held that reputation was important for the individual and for how one's reputation would reflect upon the reputation or standing of the state, traditional (imperial) Chinese culture held that reputation was all important because it reflected upon the family and most especially, one's parents. So, due to this societal understanding of the family as the most important social unit, children owe in addition to honor, obedience and service, the further duty of maintaining a good reputation, thereby not bringing shame or dishonor to the parents or family.

Confucius also said, "While parents live serve them rightfully; when they are dead bury them with filial rites, and sacrifice to them with proper ordinances." Filial piety, then, extends even to dead parents. Under Confucianism, ritual sacrifice to dead parents was undertaken, theoretically, because it was part of the veneration that one should perform. It was also mandated by law. Later, popular religious traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism exhorted ancestor worship through the teaching that rewards in the form of ancestral blessings would be given to the descendants who performed such rituals. Mencius said that the most unfilial act that a son can perform is not to have children himself. This is presumably because then there would be no one to carry on the ancestor worship. Again, these views reflect the reliance of all other obligations on filial ones since it appears that even having children is an act that one should do for one's parents.

With the fall of the Ch'in Dynasty (the last dynasty), Confucianism as a state cult faded and its influence dissipated. Confucian family attitudes, however, still persisted (in both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China), even through the
New Culture Movement (1915 - 1925). This was a period when the western values of individualism, freedom and democracy were embraced to an extraordinary degree by the Chinese intellectuals.\textsuperscript{40} The strength of these values may probably be attributed to the family unit itself as the basis of the society. The modern law requires support and maintenance of parents by children. The new Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, put into effect January 1, 1981, holds that adult children are still legally required to support parents who can no longer support themselves.\textsuperscript{41} This extends to the support of grandparents who are in need of assistance, if their children are deceased.\textsuperscript{42} The purpose of such laws is not clear; has the government made these duties legally binding because children were not taking care of their parents (implying further that the state does not or cannot accept this responsibility) or is this law merely a reflection of the cultural and moral values of the Chinese people registered in the only sacred text left of the modern state - the law. Since these two rationales are not mutually exclusive, perhaps both are in some sense true.

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

As seen above, there appears theoretically to be no limit to the duty of filial obedience, and likewise it seems no limit set for honor and service. Two additional issues must be addressed: the fact that filial obligations are not predicated upon the quality of the parenting or the benefits bestowed, and the fact that as they are paradigmatic for all other obligations, they are also considered morally more important than all other special and general obligations that a person has. This section will focus on each of these comments.

i.) Confucius said that reverence for parents springs from the natural affection that
children feel when young. This reverence is due to parents because of the "boundless kindness" that children received from them. According to this, filial piety seems to be a specific instance of the virtue of gratitude. Because of the intentional kindness and benefits (more on this in later discussions of the gratitude concept) that parents bestow on children, children should revere parents. Though this argument is appealed to, it cannot be the complete explanation. First, because, as seen above, the concentration is upon how an individual manifests jen to parents, not upon gratitude for the services or affection of parents. And second, because while reverence may spring from natural affection, reverence and filial obligations are still owed even when such natural affections was not present. Further, it is clearly indicated that the obligations of the child to the parents are in no way dependent upon the quality of specific instances of parenting. Children are called to be respectful and kind and to perform certain duties for the benefit of their parents even when the parents are not kind or good to the children. In a work dating from the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368 - 1644), "The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Duty" (Erh-shih-ssu hsiao), children are praised and held as an example for all others who perform acts of filial piety for their unkind, selfish or mean-spirited parents. This is shown clearly in the first example of a good and filial son but mean-spirited parents. Such acts are moreover encouraged by examples which show the transformation of mean parents of a good child. "The Twenty-Four Examples" shows that Heaven helps children who are good to their parents.

ii.) The most important obligation that a man has is to his parents. Consequently the most important obligation to which he is bound are filial obligations. Even among the relationships within the family, one's parents come first, even before a man's wife
and children.

There are five things which in the common parlance of the age are said to be unfilial. The first is laziness in the use of one's four limbs, so as not to attend to the maintenance of his parents. The second is gambling and chess-playing, and being fond of spirits, so as not to attend to the maintenance of one's parents. The third is being fond of goods and money, and being selfishly attached to one's wife and children, so as not to attend to the maintenance of one's parents. The fourth is following the desires of one's ears and eyes, so as to bring one's parents to disgrace. The fifth is being fond of bravery, fighting and quarrelling, so as to endanger his parents. The term "selfishly attached" to one's wife and children could mean either that attachment is sometimes excessive or that any attachment which puts wife or children before parents is selfish. From the context of the passage and the discussion thus far, it is not implausible to conclude that the latter is the correct interpretation. The "Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Duty" also indicates the superiority of filial obligations to other duties to close family members. In the thirteenth example, a man who is so poor that he is having trouble feeding his wife, child, and mother says to his wife,

"We are so poor that our mother cannot be supported, for the child divides with her the portion of food that belongs to her. Why not bury this child? Another child may be born to us, but a mother, once gone, will never return." His wife did not venture to object to the proposal, and Kuo immediately digs a hole about three cubits deep, when suddenly he lights upon a pot of gold, and on the metal reads the following inscription: "Heaven bestows this treasure upon Kuo Chu, the dutiful son; the magistrate may not seize it, nor shall the neighbours take it from him." The significance of this example is that for the Chinese, the obligation to provide for and support parents takes precedence over the obligations that parents have to provide for their own children. Here, heaven rewarded the man for putting his parent before his child. This view follows of course conceptually from the belief that filial obligations are
the root of all obligations to others in imperial Chinese culture. Infanticide especially of female children was considered moral permissible and even obligatory in certain circumstances. This is quite different from some Western intuitions concerning the conflict between these two duties.

As we might expect, filial piety had stronger claims on an individual’s allegiance than did the state or emperor. When someone remarked to Confucius that a man in his part of the country was so honest that he reported the thievery of his own father, Confucius replied, "The honest in my part of the country...are different from that, for a father will screen his son, and a son his father, -- and there is honesty in that."\(^{47}\) The state expected that a son would put a father first and even encouraged this kind of behavior, as long as it did not pose a threat to the interests of the state.\(^{48}\)

It should also be remembered that every father or husband is also a son himself and therefore owes duties of filial piety to his father. It is important then that as father, husband and head of a household, a man should act kindly and benevolently towards the members of his house. Not only because this also fulfills the ethical demands of jen, but also because they will then help him perform his filial duties.\(^{49}\) In addition, there existed a provision in the criminal law during the Ch’ing Dynasty (1644 - 1912) that a prison sentence could be commuted if the man was the sole support of his parents, whether living or dead (since one still had duties of worship to the dead parents) and sons could take the place of their fathers in criminal punishment and also in military service.\(^{50}\)

The Civil Code of the Republic of China published in 1931 states that parents and children and sons/daughters-in-law and mothers/fathers-in-law (if living in the same
household) are under mutual obligation to maintain one another.\textsuperscript{51} In cases where there are a number of family members with support obligations, the duty falls first to children of the person in need. Further, all children of a parent in need were required to support the parent according to their ability to afford such support.\textsuperscript{52} If there is more than one family member who is in need of support and yet there is limited means available to the person who is bound to provide support, the law states that one is bound to provide first to parents and grandparents and second to children and grandchildren. And in the case of more than one parent or a parent and a grandparent who need maintenance, "each shall receive maintenance according to his needs."\textsuperscript{53}

4. Women and Filial Obligation

i.) Sons owed deference, obedience and honor to both father and mother.\textsuperscript{54} In addition, the ties of affection to the mother were usually stronger than to the father since the mother was not the disciplinarian. The mother played a major role in the family for she was responsible for choosing the wife of the son. "Usually his mother played a major role in this matter of choice, since it was she who would have, at least during the early years of the marriage, a relationship with their daughter-in-law that would overshadow that between the newly-married husband and wife."\textsuperscript{55} This is an important point for it shows that the new filial bond of mother-daughter-in-law was more important in Chinese families than the new marital bond.

In the case of a widowed mother, the son was allowed to exert authority, however, practically speaking, if he were used to acquiescing to her is the past, he usually would continue to do so.\textsuperscript{56} The son however also owed deference to his mother not because she was his mother but rather on the more general understanding that she was a member
of the older generation which always merited respect form the younger generation.

ii.) Daughters also were instructed on filial piety, but this is not mentioned in these texts as are the duties of the sons. In the "Twenty-Four Examples", a woman’s care of parents is only mentioned in reference to her in-laws, as in the example stated just above and also in the eleventh example, in which a woman walked a great distance everyday to get the water from a river that her mother-in-law loved to drink. It is said that the son’s wife "fulfilled her mother-in-law’s commands without the least reluctance."\(^{57}\) This lack of what adult daughters owe their parents is the result of the fact that adult daughters are married out of the family into their husband’s family. At such time, the obligations to their parents cease. They are obligated to their husband and to their husband’s parents. Unfilial conduct to a husband’s parents is one of the seven reasons that a man may divorce his wife. However, respecting the mourning time (3 years) for either or both of one’s in-laws is one of the three sanctions that protect a woman from divorce by her husband. Such an action in pre-revolutionary China was considered the "the highest act of filial duty."\(^{58}\)

There is a work written in 106 A.D., during the Han Dynasty which is called "Lessons for Women". What is more unusual is that it was written by a woman scholar, Pan Chao. This work was greatly esteemed when written and the Emperor commanded the women in his family to learn it with the women of Pan Chao’s family. Pan Chao says that women must follow every command and wish of their parents-in-law: "Such (docility) may be called obedience which sacrifices personal opinion. Therefore the ancient book, 'A Pattern for Women,' says: 'If a daughter-in-law (who follows the wishes of her parents-in-law) is like an echo and a shadow, how could she not be
5. Conclusion

We have just reviewed the great importance of filial obligation in both ancient China and post-revolutionary China and have tried to delineate in sketch form what filial obligations for the Chinese entail. Filial piety functions as the most important practical virtue. It prescribes for the Chinese people not only what is due to one's parents but also how one should behave in most aspects of one's life. In practice and application, filial piety has had such pervasive and lasting influence on the culture because it has been supported and reinforced by the classics, the examination system and rewards from the state and it has been protected by law. ⁶⁰

It is also quite interesting to our analysis that the story of Kuo Chu who was willing to sacrifice his child bears a striking similarity to the biblical story of Abraham willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on God's command, only to have God stop him as he raised the knife. God praises Abraham the way that heaven rewarded Kuo Chu. The difference of course between the stories is that the Chinese man was willing to sacrifice his child for the good of his parent while Abraham was willing to sacrifice his child for God. But even this follows from the fact that in tradition Chinese culture, filial piety is the highest obligation and in the Jewish religion, as we shall see below, filial obligations was superseded only by divine obligations. ⁶¹

II. Religious Traditions

A. The Jewish Tradition

*Kibbud av ve'aim* - Hebrew, for the honoring of father and mother, is a very
strong and important theme in the Jewish tradition. It can be understood through the context of a religious world view that emphasizes a strong community and a great respect for the family. There is, however, no one extensive passage that teaches the Judaic view on filial responsibility, but rather a number of short statements and teachings from which the nature, flavor and strength of the view must be extracted. Gerald Blidstein puts the point thus:

The intensity of kibbud av must not be sought in biblical statements, declarative sentences simply considered. It lies elsewhere: in the patriarchal narratives that presuppose the graceful subordination and loyal service of children to parents; in the power and meaningfulness of God's self-description as "father" of his people Israel; in the strategic location of filial piety in the Ten Commandments, where it is the first of the "social commands" and indeed the only positive demand in the Decalogue made upon man in society. The intensity of kibbud av is not to be found in extensive dialectical interpretation in the Talmud but rather in the context and stress of its teaching: man must honor his parents as he honors God, for all three share in his creation;...⁴²

Many of the rabbis have done exegetical work on this subject, however many of these teachings contradict or at least differ with each other on subtle conceptual points. Some consensus on broad issues may be gained and another candidate(s) for the foundation of filial responsibility emerges.

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

Honor, personal service and reverence are due to parents. The first suggested reason is related to the strong emphasis on parents as co-creators of children. Because parents brought their children into the world and are responsible for giving them life, they are due a special consideration from those whom they have "benefitted" in this unique and foundational way - foundational because the benefit derived from having life,
is a pre-condition to experiencing all other benefits. However, there is also another reason; children should honor their parents because of all that the parents did to train and raise their children. This last is related to the reciprocity argument found with the Greek and Roman view. However, there are differences. The Judaic tradition emphasizes, as we have seen, an attitude and emotional component lacking in the Greek view. This seems to make the concept more similar to the notion of gratitude than the notion of reciprocity. If we choose, for the moment, to use the language of gratitude, we must clarify what appears to be the reason for the gratitude: is it gratitude for giving one existence or is it gratitude for having been taken care of and raised? It seems that both notions are appealed to in the writings of the tradition. But for purpose of our analysis gratitude for giving existence seems to be the primary underlying explanation of filial responsibility for the following of reasons: 1) emphasis on parents as co-creators with God, 2) responsibilities are not waived upon the poor performance of parents, and 3) biological generation as the sole determinant for the ascription of parenthood status. Let us look at each of these in turn.

First, as seen above, parents, by the nature of their role are viewed as creators, or co-creators with God. It is arguable whether honoring parents is a way of honoring God because God commanded it and we should due what he commands, the view in the bible, or whether honoring parents is honoring God as a creator also because parents are partners in creation with God - which is the view of the Talmudist tradition- "There are three partners in a man: God, his father, and his mother."63

Second, like the Greeks, the Jews held that fathers had an obligation to teach their sons a trade. Unlike the Greeks, however, the Jews did not believe that fathers who
failed this obligation were then due no filial obligations from their sons. The Rabbis of
the Torah agreed that a father who fails to teach his son a craft (understood as a
livelihood or as a metaphor for the study of the Torah) has in effect taught his child
thievery.64 Though an explicit argument is lacking, we may propose that the duties
that children have towards their parents do not appear to be dependent upon parents
fulfilling their responsibility towards their children. "Halakhically, as we shall see, the
obligation to revere one's parents is not normally dependent upon their having been
adequate to their parental duties."65 Elsewhere, Blidstein relates a Talmudic story of
Dama, son of Netinah whose mother beat him in front of other men when he was a
grown man, "but he did not shame her."66 Indeed, the Talmud seems to include quite
a number of such stories which show exemplary behavior on the part of a son towards
his parents. These appear to be touted as required conduct for any filial son.67 In
regard to the story of the mother of Dama hitting him in public, Blidstein makes the
following summary statement:

Here again, halakhic analysis of the problem of the wicked parent, or of the
mentally incompetent parents, must defer to the lesson of the episode:
however trying the provocation, the honor of the parent remains an absolute
in relation to the difficulties of the son. The obvious psychological and even
physical suffering of the son are never to be relieved at the expense of the
parent, even when the parent is their cause. As we shall see, the parent is
condemned for his behavior most strongly; but this condemnation remains
a matter between God and the parent and is irrelevant to the plight of the
son.68

From this, we can at least surmise that the Jewish view of filial responsibility may not
be founded totally on the principle of reciprocity or on a gratitude for care taking
understanding.
Finally, in regard to the issue of biological parents, the Judaic tradition has a clear history of considering this to be the only determinant of parenthood. This is shown in the discussions of "illegitimate" children and the issue of adoption. As Blidstein points out, the Jewish view on illegitimate children is that such offspring according to Jewish law are counted as rightful children of their biological parents. Furthermore, only biologically established paternity was possible under the law. This meant that adoption was not recognized. These conventions were in direct contrast to the Greek and Roman views on illegitimacy and adoption.

There is additional theme present that may be considered to be a pragmatic reason for performing duties of filial responsibility: If a person is kind and respectful to his parents, he can atone for many of his past sins and mistakes. In the Book of Ecclesiasticus it says,

Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins, he who honors his mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own, he shall be heard on the day when he prays. Long life comes to him who honors his father, he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord. He serves his parents as he does his Lord. Respect your father in deed as well as word, so that blessing may come on you from him; since a father's blessing makes the houses of his children firm, while a mother's curse tears up their foundations. Do not make a boast of disgrace overtaking your father, your father's disgrace reflects no honor on you; for a man's honor derives from the respect shown to his father, and a mother held in dishonor is a reproach to her children. My son, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins. In the days of your affliction it will be remembered of you, like frost in sunshine, your sins will melt away. The man who deserts his father is no better than a blasphemer, and whoever angers his mother is accursed of the Lord.

There are two central rewards or results of honoring one's parents for the Jews.
The first, as seen in the commandment and the passage above, is that one will gain a long and blessed life if one treats his parents well. "Honor your father and your mother, as Yahweh your God has commanded you, so that you may have long life and may prosper in the land that Yahweh your God gives to you." The second is that a person who honors his parents will be blessed in the next world:

These are things whose fruits a man enjoys in this world while the capital is saved for him in the world-to-come: honoring father and mother, deeds of loving-kindness, making peace between a man and his fellow; and the study of Torah is equal to all of them combined.

Reward is theoretically not a reason to fulfill one's filial responsibilities. It is offered though either as an incentive to encourage children to want to fulfill their role, and perhaps also to show the importance of these responsibilities to the tradition.

And finally we must consider a more theological foundation of filial responsibility. Maimonides claims that this stringent responsibility to parents is motivated by God having commanded us to honor our parents. This is a more interesting view than it may first appear because it exemplifies for us one of the major discussions in the philosophy of religion: should we honor parents because God told us to do so (divine command foundation of filial responsibility) or did God tell us to do so because it is the right conduct, justifiable from some rational position (such as gratitude for creation). An argument for both of these positions could be advanced and in as much as experts in this field have not been able to satisfactorily lay this issue to rest, I will not presume to tackle it here. We will be seeking the non-religious/rationalistic foundation of filial responsibility.

2. Content of Filial Obligation
What, specifically, does the Jewish tradition mean by honoring and respecting parents? To 'honor' a parent means that the child "must give him food and drink, clothe and cover him, lead him in and out." This particular definition of honor emphasizes one element of honor which is service and it requires "personal service in the parent's behalf quite similar to that performed by the servant for his master." R. Israel Alnakawa, a medieval moralist, specifies this passage thus:

"Clothe them" - How is this to be done? He must clothe them as is befitting, covering them from winter's clod in a wrap befitting them, and giving them proper beds,

"Lead them out" - How is this to be done? The son is obliged to accompany his father and mother, and not to turn back until they are out of sight.

"Take them in" - How is this to be done? He is obliged to give them a fitting dwelling, or rent one for them. And when the father or mother enters the son's home, he must rejoice in their coming and receive them happily.

Personal care and concern by the son for the father (especially) and mother is required in all but extreme situations and includes making sure their physical and emotional needs are met.

The Talmud also has something to say about whether a child (we may assume as stated earlier that the issue concerns a male child) should pay for the expenses of the parent. Since the child must give to the Lord (tithe) and to his parents, his help to his parents is at their expense, if they can so afford. The most important aspect that a child may give is his time.

It is crucial that, if one wishes to understand the Jewish filial ethic, the fundamental role of personal service be appreciated. The very person, nay body, of the son is claimed. Furthermore, the son is always to recognize his parents as in some way his master, the filial posture never becoming one of egalitarian comradeship. It is wise, at the same time, to...point out that the rabbinic tradition also cautioned the father to exercise his prerogatives wisely
and creatively, lest he gain a servant and lose a son. But it places this initiative - and responsibility - in parental hands. The father, from the halakhic point of view, may - and, indeed, should - refuse to be master; but the son cannot refuse to serve. The knowledge of this disparity is itself a significant element of filial consciousness.80

To show reverence to a parent means that the child "must neither stand in his [the father's] place nor sit in his place, nor contradict his words, nor tip the scales against him."81 This later means, just as the Chinese tradition held, that a son should not speak out against his father in public or private.

Crucial to both reverence and honor is not merely the above mentioned behavioral traits but also certain internal feelings and attitudes. As stated above, a child's attitude must be positive and his service cheerful. A man could feed his father pheasants with a grudging heart and gain nothing and another man could make his father grind mill (while he took his father's place in royal service) and the son could thereby bring himself "the world to come!"82 "Indeed, 'the essence of kabbah' lies in 'the heart', and only from the heart can come the proper deeds of speech and action. Even compliance with the divine command is a poor motive for respectful speech!"83

The internalized emotional correlates of behavior are just that - correlates. They do not minimize the list of concrete obligations; rather, the acted specifics are the necessary ground of the felt attitudes....One is obliged to honor one's parents in very concrete ways, extending even to personal service. But the more overt aspects of the law do not negate the more subtle ones; externals do not substitute for the internal (nor, of course, is the reverse true). The absence of real reverence is never compensated for by an overabundance of the substance, but not the spirit, of honor.84

A rabbi of the Talmud tells another story of Dama son of Nethinah, a heathen who forfeited a large profit because he would not disturb his sleeping father. The item for
sale was in a case whose key was under his father's pillow. Dama is praised for this action and is rewarded by God. The Rabbi said, "If one who is not commanded [to honour his parents], yet does so, is thus [rewarded], how much more so one who is commanded and does so!" Another Rabbi tells of his father asking for water and then falling asleep before he drinks it. The Rabbi stood over his father with the water until the father awoke. Still a third Rabbi tells of his mother who stepped upon him every time she ascended to her bed. He boasted of this in school though and he was criticized for speaking of it.

However, while emotional correlates are called for, it should be clear that "love" is not commanded:

...it is an imperative that the absence of reverence and honor cannot be excused by the absence of love. Finally, the focus on expressions of honor and reverence is true to the reluctance of the tradition to speak even of love of one's fellow, and its preference to let that love function in the concrete, loving deed. Filial love, then, is best expressed in filial service, reverence, and honor.

The teachings do not demand that children love their parents which shows that the framers thought that love is a natural feeling that cannot be commanded. Reverence, however, may be so commanded.

Blidstein considers two further instances of filial service which he says are not set apart as special issues, but which none-the-less are discussed, the responsibility of proximity and the obligations to the sick parent(s). Filial proximity, or children living near their adult parents seems to be included in the discussions of personal service. Blidstein analyses that it is in fact the need of the parent which is morally important for proximity, as it is for service. This includes however, emotional and psychological need
as well as physical dependence. "The sixteenth-century R. Solomon Luria assumed, therefore, that - all things being equal-a son ought not leave a father when his departure 'would be bitter as death.'" An exception though is made for a son who wants to leave home to go study Torah at a yeshiva. This of course is consistent with the theoretical view that obligations to God supersede obligations to parents. The only other exception to proximity (and here it is related to service) is if a man cannot find a wife in the area and wants to leave to marry. He may do so if he arranges for the satisfaction of their needs, i.e., if he is wealthy. This is interesting for, as Bliedstein notes, such an exception focuses on the non-emotional needs of the parents.

Bliedstein also relates that there is some discussion concerning filial incompatibility, in which the fact that adult children and parents often cannot get along is recognized and the issue of separation is discussed. One type of literature validated the pain of the son as well as the father and another called for the father to recognize that the son's welfare might be improved by such a separation. In either case, it appears that whatever sensitivity is shown to the son and to the fact that such situations do exist, filial responsibility is not negated but rather the specific responsibility of proximity is suspended; one still owes honor, respect and service, but the extent of personal administration is lessened.

What should be obvious to us by now is that old age itself is not a reason to give away or contract out care of a parent. Neither is the fact that a parent is sick. If anything, "the needs of the sick parents are usually greater than those of the healthy one, and so the filial responsibility and response should each correspondingly grow; obviously the Jewish ethic will not sanction the abandonment of a parent in such straits." There
are some authorities in the tradition which do recognize a limit to personal service when the demands of a senile and mentally incompetent parent become grossly overwhelming, but still even in this case personal concern and responsibility must still exist.95 There are others though who support the view that the personal limits of the son's endurance are not a matter for filial responsibility and that "the son is not to leave his parent but must shoulder the emotional burdens that are the price of effective, personal filial care."96

The recurrent and important theme through all of this analysis is that the crucial aspect of determining filial responsibility lies with the need of the parent.

In addition to the positive duties, there are also negative duties, or proscriptions, that apply to children's relationship to parents; "Anyone who strikes his father or mother must die. .... Anyone who curses father or mother must die."97 "Anyone who curses father or mother must die. Since he has cursed his father or mother, his blood shall be on his own head."98 and "'A curse on him who treats his father or mother dishonorably.' And all the people shall say: Amen."99 When, however, the punishment for hitting or cursing a parent is administered, it is the authorities who do so. The parents only have the right to present the case.100

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

As stated above, filial obligations are only superseded in the Jewish tradition by religious obligations. Accordingly, if a parent asks a child to do something that is against the law or causes the law of God to come in second, the child must not do it.101 Filial responsibility may also be limited by conflicts with other divine duties that only the individual can fulfill. These include divine commands, or "mitzvah" of individual
religious expression. The passage which engenders this discussion is as follows:

El'azar ben Matya said, "If my father says, 'Give me a drink of water,' and I am simultaneously presented with an opportunity to perform another divinely commanded act, I must waive the honoring of my parent and perform the other mitzvah, for both I and my father are obliged to perform the mitzvah."

'Issi ben Judah said, "If the commandment can be performed by others, let it be done by others, and he must attend to his father's honor."

R. Matnah said, "The law follows the opinion of Issi ben Judah."

Blidstein says that the writings on this question of the conflict between holy obligations and filial obligations are not truly helpful for they fail to address important practical questions:

All parental needs are apparently included in, "Get me a drink of water," which, though doubtless a stock formula, does refer to the least of parental wants. Evaluation - by the son - of the parental request is discounted. But are all mitzvot of equal weight? And when does the parental wish carry with it the active violation of a divine imperative? What are the bounds of a divine command - cannot virtually any human activity be part of a mitzvah structure? And when does one's participation become crucial to the success of the enterprise, when is one superfluous or replaceable? These are the obvious questions that illustrate how much remains unanswered by the baraita, seemingly so objective yet in reality open and in need of definition.

The tradition also speaks to the issue of what to do when a man's obligation to parents and to his wife conflict. This begins with the conflict when a choice of wife is against parental wishes. The various writings and opinions of rabbis within the Talmud seem to suggest that the son should respect parental wisdom, but is not obligated to abide by parental wishes concerning his choice of marriage partners. This means that if parents say that a woman is evil or is not a proper wife, they should be heeded but that parents should not interfere unless they truly believe this.
reasons why a son may choose against parental wishes for marriage: 1) because getting married is fulfilling a divine command and as stated above, if a command is such that only the individual can fulfill it himself, then the command supersedes filial obligation;\textsuperscript{106} 2) the tradition wants marriage partners to love one another and the element of compulsion makes this more difficult and is therefore not allowed;\textsuperscript{107} and 3) the fulfillment of a parental wish or will, is not considered of itself as aspect of honor, but is so only insofar as the parent’s well-being is concerned. The son’s choice of wife is not intrinsic to the parent’s welfare, and so this decision is open to parental interference. This last point is important for other aspects of this analysis and it deserves some more attention.

The most important aspect of filial responsibility is as said above, the rendering of personal service to fulfill a parent’s need. These needs are real physical, emotional needs and parents should not mask capricious and trivial whims as such. But there is no limit to obedience if the parents will benefit, even if their motive for requiring obedience is selfish.\textsuperscript{108} “What is essential, then, is that the claims of filial piety exist only in those areas in which the parent is inexorably involved - his own pleasure or pain.”\textsuperscript{109} The fact that parents may make their child’s choice of mate part of their pain, is a moot point - it is not "inexorably" part of their well-being.\textsuperscript{110}

What about conflicting obligations to one’s wife and to one’s parents? Though the ancient texts make clear that when a man marries, his filial love is supplanted by marital love, this is not true of respect.\textsuperscript{111} After marriage, a man must balance his respect for his parents with that for his wife and this is often not easy when there are conflicting obligations. There appears to be little directive writing on this particular subject.
Blidstein states:

Thus, even after we have assimilated the claim of filial responsibility to its inevitable limitation when confronted by another mitzvah, in this case that of marriage, we search in vain for the ethical and psychological insight that would mold a reality hospitable to both claims. For what is wanted, ultimately, is not only the kind of normative decisiveness that presupposes irremediable conflict, but rather the happy balance that, while not compromising the normative axiology, nonetheless cultivates both values. The Talmud - and for that matter the bulk of the literature - seems most reluctant to offer explicit prescriptions; ethical maturity, it implies, must recognize the diversity of each situation, and can at best educate toward a responsible attentiveness to the basic values of the tradition.\(^{112}\)

Blidstein concludes that the extent of filial responsibility is "indeterminate". The "floor is set down in the baraita of reverence and honor, but its ceiling ... eludes quantification."\(^{113}\) It seems that the teachers were reluctant to specify a limit to filial responsibility, and sought rather to locate filial piety high on a scale of values, but not the highest one.\(^{114}\)

The most important conflict between filial obligations and other special obligations is that which occurs when a man has obligations to his own children. Curiously, this is not treated as a separate subject anywhere in the tradition, nor does Blidstein give it much attention. He merely quotes from the Midrash an interpretation of Exodus 1:1: "Now these are the names of the sons of Jacob who came into Egypt with Jacob." The interpretation of this reads: "Though all his sons were mature men, engaged in raising their own children, they did not attend to their own affairs until they first attended to the affairs of their father,...."\(^{115}\) This interpretation sees the raising of children as part of an individual's "own affairs", as distinct from the needs of the parent. It appears from this reading and Blidstein's relative silence on the issue, that the needs of children are
not comparable to, nor on the same scale with, parental needs. They are considered part of the individual’s personal concerns and do not have a claim against filial responsibility. Surely this answer seems somewhat incomplete, yet we must consider exactly what this might mean in particular circumstances. The personal needs of the parent for physical and emotional well-being should be met by the son. Corresponding needs of young children are met by their mothers. (Hence usually no conflict). Second, as will be seen below, there is some question whether or not financial support is due to parents from their adult children. There is however, no question that a father is financially responsible for his young children. Therefore, the most likely situation in which obligations to parents and to young children would conflict is in regard to financial support. Let us consider now the arguments concerning filial responsibility of financial support.

In a passage not referring to honoring parents but rather to honoring the learned and holy ones, the Talmud states that, "honoring implies to shew (sic) respect, speak with reverence, but not to cease from work." We may infer then that, for the Jews, to honor one’s parents may mean giving them one’s time and consideration and affection, but not at the expense of one’s work. Additionally, it may mean giving money only when parents have none.

The teaching is quite clear that honoring one’s parents includes giving them any kind of financial support that is necessary.

It is stated: "Honor your father and your mother." And it is also stated: "Honor the Lord with thy substance." Just as one demands economic sacrifice, so does the other demand economic sacrifice. However, the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmud handle differently the issue of
whether financial support is due. The Palestinian Talmud says that one should provide personal service only while the Babylonian Talmud says that one should provide personal service and financial support of one's parents.

The Palestinian (TP) obligates the son, and holds that both personal service and economic care fuse in the organic category of concern and centrality called *kibbud av*. The Babylonian (TB), on the contrary, discriminates between the two; personal service is a valid demand, but financial responsibility lies outside *kibbud av*. TP, moreover, concludes that the son can be compelled to provide for his parents; TB does not consider this issue, inasmuch as it frees the son from such responsibility altogether. But other sources indicate that some Babylonian rabbis did compel sons to live up to their responsibility, though we are not told its specific nature.\(^\text{118}\)

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What if the parents have been bad? The earlier arguments were that it did not matter how the parents were, that filial responsibility still existed because of gratitude, for existence, then why is it said that children should support parents the way that parents had to support to children?

We witness here an ongoing halakhic and ethical dialectic. One pole of this dialectic is composed of a steady stream of authoritative rulings limiting filial piety to acts of personal service and concern and suggesting that the plight of the needy parent is similar to the plight of all society's needy, to be meliorated by the same general structures. The Babylonian Talmud rules that expenses are not to be borne by the son, and some thousand years later this ruling is codified in the last code, the *Shulhan Arukh*; Ramah notes that filial contributions to parental welfare need not exceed the normal charity levy. Doubtless, this position bodies forth not only a functional economic conclusion, but a theory of filial piety as well: "what counts ... is the zeal and quality of service."

This pole is in constant tension with its opposite, which insisted that filial responsibility must - in one way or another - protect the needy parent. The very demand that the structures of *zakakah* be mobilized and focused upon the recalcitrant son, a demand later integrated into the more conservative of the two postures, was at its origin an attempt by R. Akiva to fix filial responsibility. A more vigorous stance was expressed by those who would enforce filial responsibility as part of a filial piety unlimited by the various restrictions built into the structures of *zakakah*. Despite the fact that this wing, too, has textual authority behind it - the Palestinian Talmud and
the antecedent tannaitic opinions - its basic weapons could not be texts but had to be a logic generated by an overarching grasp of the halakhic ethos and a skilled utilization of halakhic dialectics.\textsuperscript{119}

4. Women and Filial Obligation

i. The fifth commandment is "Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you."\textsuperscript{120} The command is repeated in the Apocrypha and the Talmud. Honoring parents is considered a way of honoring God.\textsuperscript{121} "Revere your mother and father, and keep my Sabbaths" is yet another instance where the responsibility to parents is joined to one’s responsibility to God.\textsuperscript{122} Unlike the ancient Greek tradition, the Jewish tradition, as seen above, dictates that the mother should be held in equal esteem with the father. The holy Rabbis of the Talmud state that God knows that a son honors his mother more than his father because she raised him and talked to him. The commandment to honor one’s father is placed before that of honoring one’s mother (which is more natural and therefore not as necessary to command). Similarly, the Rabbis state, God knows that a son fears or respects his father more than his mother because the father is the one who teaches him the law. God puts the respect of mother before that of father.\textsuperscript{123} Blishstein notes that there are two additional exegeses to these contrasting verses: "The second view...is that the variation is deliberately arbitrary, and indicates that 'both are equal.' A third view notes that Scripture generally mentions the father before the mother, and reads this consistent precedence as testimony to the priority of the father - but this is predicated not on the inherent superiority of his claim as a parent but on the dynamics of the marital ethos."\textsuperscript{124}
ii. Both men and women are obligated to honor and fear their parents, however a
dominant's duties of honor and obligations to a husband might make it difficult for a
daughter to perform the proper offices for her parents. Daughters are required to obey
and respect parents, but after their marriage, they are responsible primarily to their
husbands.125 This means that while they still should honor their parents, their ability
to carry out filial responsibilities after their marriage is diminished. This is true because
they are no longer free to structure their resources to divide evenly between parents and
husband because the husband has this freedom/responsibility. However, Blidstein does
note that a husband's arbitrary will is not law: "The Mishnah...lists a variety of activities
with which a husband cannot interfere, and among them are periodic visits by his wife
to her parents."126

Additionally, because women are bound to their husbands, they are also bound to
their husband's parents. They assume with their husbands the obligations to take care
of his parents. The Mishnah states that "All obligations of the father upon the son, both
men and women are bound."127 One of the Rabbis says,

All precepts concerning a father, which are incumbent upon a son to perform
for his father, both men and women are bound thereby. We have (thus)
learnt here what our Rabbis taught: (Ye shall fear every man his father, and
his mother): 'man', I know it only of man; how do I know it of woman?
When it is said, 'Ye shall fear,' two are mentioned. If so, why state _man?
A man possesses the means to fulfil this, but woman has no means of
fulfilling this, because she is under the authority of others. R. Idi b. Abin
said in Rab's name: If she is divorced, both are equal.128

This is conceptually different from the Chinese obligations to parents-in-law because the
Chinese owe these obligations directly to the spouse's parents after marriage. The
Jewish tradition holds that a wife is helping her husband with his filial obligations or is
showing honor to her husband by honoring his parents, rather than, says Blidstein, reflecting "a new 'filial' bond linking the extended family."\textsuperscript{129} In regard to what women owe their own parents after marriage, the comparison between Chinese and Judaic views is even more interesting: After marriage for the Chinese, theoretically, obligations towards a woman's parents are negated. However, the Jewish position holds that such obligations still exist theoretically, but the tradition recognizes the practical difficulty of fulfilling these after marriage.

5. Conclusion

Filial obligations for the Jewish tradition consist of honor and maintenance by giving of one's time, energies, and affections. If parents do not have the financial resources then these may be included as well. Though the affection of children is not "commanded" it is offered as the appropriate manner of approach to one's parents. The moral basis of such obligations appears to be something different than that of either the Greeks or the Chinese. It is not strictly reciprocity (as with the Greeks), as we said earlier, because duties still hold even if parents do not (fully) uphold theirs. Likewise, the element of affection is not required on a reciprocity account since intentions and dispositions do not matter in this case. However, it does not seem the strictly based virtue theory of the Chinese either. Based upon the beliefs that the relationship between parent and child should mirror the relationship between God and his people, we may conclude that the philosophical argument for filial obligations on a Jewish model would be that of gratitude. Children should be grateful to parents who created them and believers should be grateful to God who created them. We will explore the argument from gratitude below.
B. The Christian Tradition

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

A problem that is encountered in the study of the Christian view on filial obligations is that there is no single document or set of writings on the topic in any of the many different Christian denominations - Roman Catholic, various Protestant sects, or the Orthodox church. Additionally, unlike the two other major religions considered in this chapter, Judaism and Islam, filial responsibility does not appear to be a major theme. We will then present a general Christian viewpoint on filial responsibility as best it can be constructed from the scriptural texts, commentaries, and other pertinent documents.

As was the case with the discussion of the Chinese tradition, the Christian perspective on filial obligations needs to be discussed in reference to the basic theological and moral underpinnings of the Christian tradition in general. Christians hold both that right and wrong is determined by God's will and that God is love. While all Christians believe that God's will determines right and wrong, the different types of Christianity hold out different modes for the transmission of his will. The Catholics believe that God's will is learned through the authority of the Church and clergy and only slightly through an individual conscience, the Protestants believe that God's will is known through the Bible and through conscience.

The second fundamental concept of Christianity is that God is love and that the foundation of Christianity is God's love for his people. God's love is known as "agape" - unconditional, undeserved love. The love of God for humankind is first manifested in creation and consists in God giving people what they need, not what they deserve.\(^\text{130}\)
"If God is love, the Christian reality is a share in that love, through which the Spirit transmits to us Christ's life, by which we become God's children."131 Hence, people become "brother and sisters in Christ" when they accept God as their father and Jesus as His Son and their Lord. Christians are called and are bound by duty to love each other as God loves them. It is interesting to note two points here: first, that agape has similarities to the Chinese principle of jen. However, jen is extended primarily to one's family and is a sort of "ranked love", while the Christian agape consists of equal love for all those who are God's children. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?", Jesus asks his followers.132 Second, the centrality of the family as the basic and crucial social unit is affirmed by the use of the concept to describe God's relationship with his people.

Like the Chinese, the Christian tradition is also rooted in a virtue ethics theory. The principle virtue for Christians is charity. This makes sense if we understand that the two commandments given to Christians are to love God with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as one loves oneself.133 Charity is the virtue from which all others are derived. Another fundamental concept embedded in agape and charity is that of self-sacrifice. To love one's neighbor in the way commanded entails a willingness to be a servant to others.

As stated, there is no passage which provides an argument for the reason why one should perform filial duties and in fact there are at least five occasions reported in the Gospels in which Jesus seems to de-emphasize the importance of filial obligations and respect for the ways of the elders. To this end, the New Testament teaching might seem to be even limiting that which is due to parents because of the tremendous emphasis on
the call to love one’s neighbor.

In The Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says,

Do not suppose that my mission on earth is to spread peace. My mission is to spread, not peace, but division. I have come to set a man at odds with his father, a daughter with her mother, a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law: in short, to make a man’s enemies those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me. He who seeks only himself brings himself to ruin, whereas he who brings himself to nought for me discovers who he is.¹³⁴

And again, when Jesus was addressing a crowd of people, his mother came to see him:

The crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you." He said in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And gazing around him at those seated in the circle he continued, "These are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me."¹³⁵

Thirdly, when Jesus was calling disciples he said, "'Come after me.' The man replied, 'Let me bury my father first.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their dead; come away and proclaim the kingdom of God.'"¹³⁶ There are other passages in which Jesus asks people to leave family and home to follow him.

The fourth example is from Paul who says that "Children should not save up for their parents, but parents for children."¹³⁷

These passages should be understood as emphasizing the supreme obligation to follow Jesus and to love all of God’s people as one would love members of one’s family. Christianity holds that to be a follower of Christ, one must understand that acts of the virtue of religion are more encompassing than the acts of the virtue of piety. The reason for this according to Aquinas¹³⁸ is that God is the most excellent and most good thing that exists and He is the ultimate creator of humans - our first "principle" of being.
Aquinas says that,

I answer that, Man becomes a debtor to other men in various ways, according to their various excellence and the various benefits received from them. On both counts God holds first place, for He is supremely excellent, and is for us the first principle of being and government. In the second place, the principles of our being and government are our parents and our country, that have given us birth and nourishment. Consequently man is debtor chiefly to his parents and his country, after God. Wherefore just as it belongs to piety, in the second place, to give worship to one’s parents and one’s country.¹³⁹

Filial obligations are based upon the fact that we owe a debt (what kind of debt, we will look at shortly), to our parents because they gave us life and took care of us. Aquinas also shows us that because God is the most excellent and supreme creator and caretaker, the virtue of religion, or worshiping God is greater than the virtue of piety, or the worship of one’s parents.

The four passages mentioned can be interpreted as showing how very important the obligation to follow Jesus is for those who claim to be believers. The argument for filial obligations for the Christian tradition is an extension of the general Christian call to love one another as Christ loves his people. Taking care of parents then is supported by the general Christian concept of the duty which follows from the Christian virtues of gratitude and compassion which are encompassed in the primary virtue of agape. The Catholic tradition understands filial virtue as piety which is part of the general virtue of charity and benevolence.

The old people!...Toward these, regardless of your own age, you are bound, as you know, by the precept of the Decalogue, "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Exod. 20:12). You will not be of the number of those ungrateful children who neglect their old parents, and who in turn will, often enough, find themselves abandoned when age renders them in need of assistance.¹⁴⁰
However, this cannot be the whole of the obligation. Jesus does demand that the
treatment of parents and family be set apart. Christian respect for filial obligations
appears to be founded upon the arguments and traditions of the Jewish religion.

The Biblical commandment to 'Honor your father and mother' (Deut. 5:16)
reminds us that, above all else, the family ought to be a place of love,
respect and caring for the aging members of society.\textsuperscript{141}

The Documents of Vatican II state in regard to the obligation of children to their parents,

As living members of the family, children contribute in their own way to
making their parents holy. For they will respond to the kindness of their
parents with sentiments of gratitude, with love and trust. They will stand by
them as children should when hardships overtake their parents and old age
brings its loneliness.\textsuperscript{142}

2. Content of Filial Obligation

In the New Testament, Jesus affirms the fifth commandment.\textsuperscript{143} He rejected
some of the traditions of the elders, such as the washing of hands before meals, saying
to the Pharisees:

"You disregard God's commandment and cling to what is human tradition."
He went on to say: "You have made a fine art of setting aside God's
commandment in the interests of keeping your traditions! For example,
Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and in another place,
'Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.' Yet you declare,
'If a person says to his father or mother, Any support you might have had
from me is korban' (that is, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing
more for his father or mother. That is the way you nullify God's word in
favor of the traditions you have handed on."\textsuperscript{144}

The Apostles state that good children provide for parents\textsuperscript{145} and widows.\textsuperscript{146}
Disobedience to parents is censured; it is grouped with being selfish, greedy, licentious
and profane.\textsuperscript{147} In addition, there is one reference to treating the old in general as one
would treat a father\textsuperscript{148} and to providing for any of one's relatives: "If anyone does not provide for his own relatives and especially for members of his immediate family, he has denied the faith; he is worse than an unbeliever."\textsuperscript{149}

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

It is important to understand that at least according to the Catholic tradition, worship of parents cannot conflict with the worship of God since virtues cannot conflict with each other. Aquinas says,

Now, as stated above (I-II, Q. 7, A.2; Q. 18, A. 3), the act of every virtue is limited by the circumstances due thereto, and if it overstep them it will be an act no longer of virtue but of vice. Hence it belongs to piety to pay duty and homage to one's parents according to the due mode. But it is not the due mode that man should tend to worship his father rather than God, but, as Ambrose says on Luke 12:52, the piety of divine religion takes precedence of the claims of kindred.\textsuperscript{150}

In addition, Aquinas goes on to say that if the worship of parents prevents or diminishes the worship of God, such worship of parents would no longer count as an act of piety.\textsuperscript{151} Aquinas says that it is important to realize that the reason that Jesus told the disciple not to bury his father (in one of the examples given above) could have been either - as was on Chrysostom's view - that He wanted to spare the man that sorrow and there were others who were also bound by the duties of kinship to take care of it, or - as was on Cyril's view - that the father was yet living and the request was really that he might stay to support him until he should have to bury him and this again could be taken care of by the others who were bound to take care of him.\textsuperscript{152} However, because the "worship to God includes the worship due to our parents as a particular,"\textsuperscript{153} and because taking care of our parents is also like taking care of our neighbors which God
commands us to do, it is usually the case that if parents are in need of our assistance, there is no one else to help them, and they do not "incite us to nothing against God, we must not abandon them for the sake of religion."^154

The general theme of the supremacy of the obligation to God over the obligation to family is not entirely unique to the Christian tradition. As noted above, the Jewish and also the Islamic traditions have this feature. There is a story in the Torah which we mentioned earlier. God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Abraham's willingness to do this is lauded as proof of his faith and he is rewarded. In addition, the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions suspend filial obligations to obey and honor parents if parents require their child to go against the teaching of God. As we saw earlier, the Chinese do not hold this, for nothing is greater to them than filial piety.

What about, however, parents who have not been good to their children? These children should also be good to their parents if only under the general appeal to love others, even those who have done harm or wronged the individual:

If you do good to those who do good to you, how can you claim any credit? Sinners do as much. If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what merit is there in it for you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full....Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Pardon, and you shall be pardoned. Give, and it shall be given to you."^155

Implicitly appealed to in this Christian understanding of filial duties and the virtues that underlie them is the context of the family and the concept of self-sacrifice. The Catholic tradition, like the Chinese (but not as strongly reinforced by culture and law) holds that the family is the primary community in which a person lives is the most
important basis of the community. It is here that the important human relations nourish and strengthen a person.

The family is the basic unit of any community and is itself an expression of love. We cannot emphasize enough the critical role of the family in caring for their aging loved ones and keeping them in their midst as valuable, contributing members. The family is where the elderly feel most comfortable and accepted. We call on each family to weigh carefully its obligation to care for an elderly father or mother, uncle or aunt.\(^{156}\)

The notion of self-sacrifice is not qualified by whether a person "deserves" another's sacrifice. The only relevant consideration is whether another needs the service or attention of the actor. If the need exists, then according to agape, the actor should try to fill it. If this requires personal or self-sacrifice, that makes the action even more laudable. The Catholic tradition in particular emphasizes that the virtues of gratitude and compassion cannot be totally discharged by substitutes. The provision of basic physical needs, obtained through personal service or purchases is not enough. One must give of oneself, in providing emotional support and companionship. This is where the notion of self-sacrifice comes into play.

Should elderly family members require a form of institutionalization, the obligations of the family remain. Responsibility for their well being cannot be left to health care professionals and social service agencies alone. Often, only relatives and friends can provide the love and personal attention that humanize the sometimes lonely experience of institutional care.\(^{157}\)

4. Conclusion

The Christian tradition's understanding of filial obligations rests on the virtues of gratitude and compassion. If one follows Christ, compassion should be encouraged towards all who are in need (agape), regardless of one's relationship with them. But
towards those who took care of one, gratitude should be present. In response to the "bad" or absent parents, Christianity calls its followers to exhibit the highest form of love and caring, love of the enemy and of the down-trodden. The Catholic tradition in particular understands filial responsibilities in terms of the virtues of piety, gratitude and compassion.

C. The Islamic Tradition

In the Islamic tradition, as in Chinese and Jewish cultures, obligations to parents are a central and important concept. The responsibilities that a child, no matter what his age, has in regard to his parents include kindness, service and obedience. Like the view stated in the Judaic culture, and unlike the Chinese, the obligation to obey and respect parents, regardless of a child's age, is second only to the obligation that a Muslim owes to God, or Allah. The primary text for this is from the Qur'an:

And (remember) when Luqman said unto his son, when he was exhorting him: O my dear son! Ascribe no partners unto Allah. Lo! to ascribe partners (unto Him) is a tremendous wrong -- And We have enjoined upon man concerning his parents -- His mother beareth him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years -- Give thanks unto Me and unto thy parents. Unto Me is the journeying. But if they strive with thee to make thee ascribe unto Me as partner that of which thou hast no knowledge, then obey them not. Consort with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who repenteth unto Me. Then unto Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what ye used to do.\(^{158}\)

From this passage, we see that the obligation to parents comes directly after the obligation to acknowledge and worship only the one God. In addition, the child is told to be grateful to both Allah and to his parents who have created him and suffered for him. This is suggestive of the gratitude for creation argument from the Jewish tradition (but the Judaic view does not include the suffering component). Finally, the child is told
to be kind to, but not to obey parents who command anything that is against the teachings of Islam. We will return to each of these themes, especially that of gratitude, as we discuss what form and nature the responsibilities of kindness, service and obedience take.

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

One way to get at the source of filial obligations for the Islamic tradition is to juxtapose the basis theoretical beliefs of a tradition already studies, Judaism, with those of Islam. First, the Jewish tradition emphasizes a responsibility ethic which concentrates on duties, in this case, those that a son owes his parents. The Islamic view, though, emphasizes the rights of the parents. Aliah Schleifer says that a hadith commenting on the Qur'anic verse, "Worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents" [2:83], reports, "Ibn Kathir says that these are the highest and greatest of the rights, i.e., the right of Allah...that He be worshipped alone, with nothing associated with Him; then, after that, is the right of His creatures, and He firmly commissions them and their children with the right of parents, and thus Allah draws a parallel between His right and the right of parents."159 Since rights and duties are correlative - X having a right that I not do Q, implies that I have a duty not to do Q - the meaningful difference here is one of emphasis. The Jewish tradition focuses on what a son should do for his parents, while the Islamic view concerns what parents may rightfully expect from their son.

Second, as we noted above, the Jewish tradition makes reference to God's favor and offers the reward of long life to those who obey the commandment to honor parents. However, the reason to obey the commandment is only indirectly related to this promise of earthly rewards. Children must perform their duty for its intrinsic value (whether that be because God commanded it, or God commanded it because it is right) and such
reward oriented motives are not central to its full justification. The Islamic view, however, is much more of a consequentialist one in comparison to this. A compelling reason to be kind, to support and to obey one’s parents is that such things will either redeem one or ensure one’s place in Paradise (Heaven). The Qur’an promises at least two positive and one negative result for those who obey their parents:

Firstly, life may be prolonged as the Prophet said: Nothing but obedience to parents can prolong life. (2:7). Secondly, if parents are not obeyed, punishment on their sons comes in this world. The Prophet said: Verily He hastens punishment for one who disobeys parents in his life before death. (2:29). Thirdly, death is made easy for one who obeys parents. The Prophet said: Whoso has got three things in him, Allah will make his death easy and will admit him in Paradise: Mercy to the weak, kindness to parents, and doing good to slaves.\(^{160}\)

In addition, the following hadiths address this theme clearly:

"Narrated Ibn ’Umar:... A man came to the Messenger of Allah...and said: I committed a great sin. Is there anything I can do to repent? He said: Do you have a mother? The man said: No. He said: Do you have a maternal aunt? The man said: Yes. He said: Then, be kind and devoted to her." (At-Tirmidhi)\(^{161}\)

"Narrated Ibn ’Abbas: Do not leave your mother unless she gives you permission or death takes her, because that is the greatest (deed) for your reward." (At-Tabarani in Al-Kabir)\(^{162}\)

"Narrated Ibn ’Abbas: Whoever kissed his mother between the eyes had protection from the Fire." (Ibn ’Addi, Al-Baihaqi in Shu’b Al-’Iman)\(^{163}\)

Third, like the Judaic view, the Islamic notion of filial obligations is based, for a large part, on gratitude. However, the Islamic view of parents emphasizes the role of parents as care takers over parents as creators. In regard to the Qur’anic verse, "Worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents,"\(^{164}\) Schleifer reports that,

Al-Qurtubi says that Allah, the Great and Lofty, makes a parallel in this verse, between the right of parents and the Unity (of Allah) because the
formation (genesis) proceeds from Allah, and the second formation - upbringing - proceeds from the parents. Thus, Allah compares thankfulness to parents with thankfulness to Him; this being expressed explicitly in Surah 31, Verse 14: "Give thanks unto Me and unto thy parents."  

This of course is a different emphasis than the Judaic tradition which calls attention to parents as co-creators with God and therefore commands gratitude for creation or giving existence. Even though the Islamic tradition appeals to gratitude for existence, it seems to rest the major portion of its implicit argument on gratitude for the duties of care-taking performed by the parents:

Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, say not "Fie" unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little.  

This gratitude, moreover, should not be motivational merely on a rational plane, but rather should encourage a child’s disposition and affective states to be positively oriented towards the parents.

Al-Qurtubi says that...the Most High ordered His slaves to be merciful to their parents and to pray for them. Thus, you should be compassionate to them as they were to you, and befriend them as they did you, remembering that when you were an incapable, needy child, they preferred you to themselves, and they stayed awake nights, and went hungry while they satisfied your appetite, and were in need of clothes while they clothed you. So, reward them when they reach old age in the condition that you were in as a child, in that you treat them as they did you, and give kindness to them priority.  

This aspect of friendship and affection is similar to the Jewish tradition as well. There is, however, one passage that is troubling to this analysis of the reasons for gratitude:
"Ibn 'Abbas said that the Prophet...said: He who ends the day and his parents are satisfied with him and begins the day thus, ends and begins the day, and to him, two doors to Paradise are opened; and if it is one parent, then one door. And he who ends and begins the day and is the object of odiousness to his parents, he ends and begins the day and to him, two doors to the Fire are opened, and if it is one parent, then one door. Then, a man said: O Messenger of Allah, and if they have mistreated (oppressed) him? He said: And (even) if they have mistreated him, and even if they have mistreated him and even if they have mistreated him."\textsuperscript{168}

If the reason for gratitude to one’s parents rests on the notion that the parents took care of the children, then presumably what children would owe to their parents if the parents failed to take care of them, or even worse, mistreated them, would be quite minimal if anything at all. The above passage, though, states that even if the parents mistreat the child, the child still must make the parents satisfied with his behavior and service. There are a number of things we could say in response to this. First, in this case, the child does not have to feel grateful or even act from gratitude, or that in such cases you do it for the reward which is dependent only upon doing the filial thing.

2. Content of Filial Obligation

Kindness and service are the first and foremost responsibility of the child for the parent (note that once again we are talking about male children). Children are given specific prohibitions against unkindness to parents.\textsuperscript{169} The following hadiths point to the importance of these concepts:

"Narrated 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud: I asked the Messenger of Allah ...which deed was the preferred one? He said: Prayer at its proper time. Then I asked: Which is next? He said: Kindness to parents. Then I asked: Which is next? He said: Fighting for the sake of Allah." (Muslim)\textsuperscript{170}

"Narrated 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr Ibn Al-'As...: The Messenger of Allah...excused a man from jihad. He said: Are your parents alive? He said: Yes. He said: Then, (struggling) in their service is your jihad."\textsuperscript{171}
"Narrated Anas...: A man came to the Messenger of Allah... and said: I longed to go on jihad but I was not able to. He said: Is either one of your parents still alive? The man said: My mother. He said: Allah has instructed us in devotion to her, so if you do thus, you are as one who has made the hajj, the 'umrah and participated in jihad."

Children are told to be kind to their parents, even if their parents are non-Muslims. A hadith quotes Asma bint Abu Bakr, who said, "My mother, who was a non-believer, came...I went to seek the advice of the Prophet, saying, 'My mother has arrived and she is hoping for my favour.' The Prophet said, 'Yes, be good to your mother.'"

Both Islamic and Judaic traditions make reference to the analogy of the master-slave dialectic. Schleifer states,

Ibn Al-Musayyib said, "This refers to the sinner slave's speaking rude harsh words to the master." Al-Qurtubi goes on to say that the lending of affection and mercy to parents and submission to them is the submission of the governed to the leader, and that of the slave to the master as Sa'id Ibn Al-Musayyib indicated. Thus, the intention of the ruling of this verse is that the person should put himself in a state of maximum submission with respect to his parents, in his speech and his silence and his looks, and should not give them sharp looks, as this is the look of the angered.

There are numerous references in the Jewish tradition stating that the son should act like a slave toward the father. However, the Jewish tradition states that the father should not accept this behavior, but that the son should still act this way.

There is a similarity not only in the use of stories of exemplary filial behavior to illustrate the lengths to which "good children" will go to serve their parents, but also in the content of the stories themselves. We mentioned above the story of the Rabbi who brought his father the drink he requested, and then waited over him until he awoke and also the story of Dama who would not awaken his father and thus gave up a large
profit. An Islamic hadith relates the following story:

"Abdullah Ibn 'Umar reported that Allah's Messenger...said: Three persons set out on a journey. They were overtaken by rain and they had to find protection in a mountain cave, when at its mouth there fell a rock of that mountain, and thus blocked them altogether. One of them said to the others: Look at your good deed that you performed for the sake of Allah and then supplicate Allah the Exalted, that He might rescue you (from this trouble). One of them said: O Allah, I had my parents who were old and my wife and my small children also. I tended the flock and when I came back to them in the evening, I did the milking and served that milk to my parents, before serving my children. One day when I was obliged to go out to a distant place in search of fodder and could not come back before evening and found them (the parents) asleep. I milked the animals as usual and brought milk to them and stood at their heads avoiding disturbing them from sleep and I did not deem it advisable to serve milk to my children before serving them. I remained there in that state and my parents too until morning. And (O Allah) if Thou art aware that I did this in order to seek Thy pleasure, give us an opening that we may see the sky. And Allah gave them an opening."

Muhammad's teachings also include the following specifications:

Children [in] solvent circumstances are bound to maintain their poor parents, while it is only a duty upon those children who are not solvent. If the parents are poor, it is also incumbent upon the poor children. Difference of religion does not absolve children from the obligation of maintaining their parents, and maintenance of the parents of an absentee may be divided out of his effects.

Again we see that even if the parents are not Muslim, a child still is responsible for their support. Also, while it is not immediately clear what the difference is between being "bound" and "only a duty" in the above passage, we may postulate that this probably refers to the scale of religious duties that goes from obligatory to forbidden. In between are categories like, "recommended, but not obligatory" which may be what is meant here by the rendering "only a duty". This distinction means that if an adult child has no money at all, he is not held at fault for failing to help his parents. Whereas a child who
is poor with little money or resources must share whatever he has with his parents if they are poor as well.

In regards to whether children are responsible for financial support, the Qur'an states, "That which ye spend for good (must go) to parents and near kindred and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer."\textsuperscript{179}

Obedience to parents in the Islamic tradition is a very strong concept. Not only must children be obedient to parents in their early years, but for the whole of their lives, whether parents are living or dead. Disobedience to parents is a very serious sin.\textsuperscript{180} This is different from the Greek and Christian tradition, but similar to the Chinese.

Analogous the Chinese tradition, children have responsibilities to their parents even after the parents are dead. All children should pay their parents' debts or fulfill their contracts and should also stay close to the family and friends with whom the parents were particularly intimate.\textsuperscript{181} Muslim children of Muslim parents are told to ask for the forgiveness of the parents' sins as well as for their own.\textsuperscript{182} However, the responsibility of prayer for a dead parent is in fact forbidden if the parent was not a Muslim. "It is not for the Prophet and those who believe to pray for the forgiveness of idolators (sic) even thought they may be near of kin."\textsuperscript{183} A hadith claims:

"Narrated Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah...said: I asked my Lord's permission to ask forgiveness for my mother, and He did not allow me to do so. And I asked for His permission to visit her grave, and He allowed me to do so."\textsuperscript{184}

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

The extent of parental influence reaches even to the matters of the personal relationships that adult children have to others. If parents want their son to divorce his wife,
the son must do so or risk the sin of disobedience. There are no mitigating factors here, unlike in the Jewish tradition where parental whims and irrational demands may be overridden. In addition, as seen in the quotations above, parental wishes and needs take priority over a man going to jihad (fighting in a war for Allah).\textsuperscript{185} As with kindness and service, a child must obey a parent even if the parent is non-Muslim. The responsibility to obey a non-Muslim, or even a Muslim, parent is mitigated only when the parent commands the child to do something against Islam.\textsuperscript{186} This view is most similar to the Judaic one which also holds that parents should be obeyed in all things except if they attempt to lead their children away from God. The difference, however, between the Jewish and Islamic views may be more one of tone rather than substance. While the Jewish tradition does hold that parents should be obeyed in all things (save the anti-religious commands), it simultaneously exhorts parents not to make life too difficult on children or make petty demands of them, both for the sake of the children and for the parents relation with God. (The Judaic tradition has the saying that a person should not put a stumbling block before the blind)

4. Women and Filial Obligation

i.) The mother has elevated status in Islam. This is an additional point of difference between the Judaic view of filial responsibility and that of Islam, for the Jews hold that the mother and father are deserving of equal respect and kindness. (The Greeks, however, hold that the father is to be honored above the mother.) The Qur’an states:

\textit{And We have commended unto man kindness towards parents. His mother beareth him with reluctance, and bringeth him forth with reluctance, and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months, till, when he}
attaineth full strength and reacheth forty years, he saith: My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks for the favour wherewith Thou hast favoured me and my parents, and that I may do right acceptable unto Thee.\textsuperscript{187}

Furthermore, it is reported in a hadith that the Prophet said:

"Allah has forbidden you to be undutiful to your mother." (Bukhari). Abu Hurairah reported that a man came to Allah's Messenger and said, "O Allah's Messenger! Who is more entitled to the best companionship by me?" The Prophet said, "Your mother". The man said, "Who next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother". The man said again, "Who next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother". The man asked for the fourth time, "Who next?" The Prophet said, "Your father" (Bukhari). He also said, "Paradise is under the feet of your mother."\textsuperscript{188}

Schleifer reports that "Al-Muhasibi affirms in his book \textit{Kitab Ar-Ra'ayah} that there is no disagreement amongst the 'Ulama' (the Muslim scholars) that the mother gets three-fourths of the devotion and the father one-fourth according to Abu Hurairah's...Hadith."\textsuperscript{189} The mother is given preference because of the suffering in childbirth and child rearing and the unique devotion that she gives to her children.

Giving the opinion of the 'Ulama'...he (An-Nawawi) says that the reason for giving the mother preference is due to her exhausting efforts for the sake of her child, her compassion, her service, the great difficulty of pregnancy, delivery, nursing and rearing of the child, her service and care for the child when it is sick, etc. In the view of the 'Ulama', the mother is the strongest member of the family in kindness and devotedness.\textsuperscript{190}

Not only do the above quotations point to the favored status of the mother, but they also, especially the last one, show that it is due to her great service and devotion to her children that such preferential treatment is warranted.

5. Conclusion

All of the traditions included here hold that children owe their parents service, honor and respect. Some emphasize obedience more than others. Whether one owes or
should give emotional or other kinds of support and why one should do this and under what circumstances one may be exempted, has been answered in a number of ways. The people of classical Greece believed that the basis of filial obligations was just compensation or a reciprocal arrangement between parents and children. To the extent that a parent failed in his/her obligations, the child's obligations were erased. The people of imperial China believed that filial piety is naturally the basis of all other ethical virtues. The Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious traditions hold various forms of the argument from gratitude (for creation and/or for caretaking). In addition, the Christian tradition bases filial obligations on the primary virtue of the love for humanity, and the secondary virtues of gratitude and compassion. We turn now to the philosophical views on filial obligations.

III. Philosophical Views

A. Plato

Plato's views on filial issues are found mainly in the Laws, but also in the Republic, his letters (Epistles), and three of the dialogues, Euthyphro, Gorgias and Protagoras. The Laws is Plato's exposition of what laws would exist in a good constitution, and therefore we may take it as authoritative concerning what Plato thought ought to be the case concerning filial obligations. Filial offices are referred to by Plato when he says "religion demands the due discharge of this earliest and heaviest debt" and the "most sacred of all our obligations."¹⁹¹ This is quite similar to the language and spirit of the Confucian view of filial piety. Indeed, Plato uses the word, "impiety" to refer the violation incurred when a child kills a parent.¹⁹²
1. Basis of Filial Obligation

Religion, for Plato was heaven and the gods. It dictates that children must recognize the debt which they owe to their parents:

It bids a man count all he has and owns at the service of those who gave him birth and breeding, to minister to their needs to his utmost ability, first with his substance, then with his body, and then with his mind, in repayment of a loan of care and painful labor made so long ago on the security of his youth, and now to be made good to his elders in their age and sore necessity. Moreover, all his life through, a man should observe particular reverence to tongue toward his parents, for light and winged speech brings heavy doom; right has her appointed messenger, Nemesis, to keep watch over the matter. So one should yield to them when they feel anger, and discharge it, in word or deed, and understand that 'tis but natural in a father who thinks himself wronged by his son to be moved to uncommon anger.193

Children owe their being and all they own and posses to their parents because their parents brought them into existence and nurtured them. Plato understands that this entails a large corresponding duty of personal care, service, and honor from children. He emphasizes the extent and nature of the child's service to the parents based upon this understanding; the child must personally and to his greatest ability "minister" to the parents and must even withstand without protest their anger. This means thinking about them and their needs, doing anything for them and giving all you have.

The language Plato uses is not, however, that of gratitude but rather that of reciprocity. He says not only that the obligation is heaviest debt, but that the children must "make good" or repay a loan given in youth. This is of course similar to the foundation of filial obligation that we saw in the Greek cultural section above. We must be careful here to read the passage in the full context in
which it appears. Although Plato uses the reciprocity idiom, his insistence on ministering to parents with one's mind and repaying a loan of "care and painful labor" seems to indicate gratitude more than reciprocity.

Plato says that heaven and the gods bless those children who give honor and the like to their parents because parents are the living representatives or images of God on earth. (This is analogous to the latter Jewish notion of parents as co-creators as the reason why honoring parents was a way to honor God.)

And so, as I have just said, we must believe that no image we can procure is more precious in heaven's eye that a father or forefather in the weakness of his age, or a mother in like case; when a man does them worship and honor, there is joy in heaven, or their prayers would not be heard. An ancestor's person is, in truth, an image of God more marvelous than any lifeless statue. These living images will always second our prayers for ourselves when we pay them worship, and pray in the opposite sense since when we show them dishonor, but the others can do neither the one thing nor the other. And so the man who bears himself as he ought to father, father's father, and the rest of his ancestors will find no other image so effectual to assure the favor of heaven as this which he has got. 194

And again:

Neglect of parents is that to which neither god nor right-thinking man will ever counsel any. A man should have the wit to see how pat the preamble now to be delivered on divine worship is like to get this theme of respect and disrespect of parents. All the world over the primitive rules of worship are two fold. Some of the Gods of our worship are manifest to sight; there are others in whose likeness we set up images, believing that when we adore the lifeless image, we win the bountiful favor and grace of the living god for whom it stands. If, then, a man have a father or mother, or a parent of either, safe kept within doors in the last frailty of age, he should remember that while there is such a figure to hallow his hearth at home, no image can be so potent for good, if only the owner give it the rightful worship he should. 195
The reward theme is similar to that in Islam.

Plato concludes that "This being nature's appointment, a good man finds his aged progenitors treasure-trove to the last breath of their lives, and when they depart, the loss to their juniors is most heavy." Plato claims that parents should be honored because the gods listen to parents' prayer and punish bad children and reward the good ones.

If there is such censure for harming parents, one can imagine that the penalty for killing a parent is even more strict according to Plato.

If ever any man should harbor such unbridled passion against those that gave him being that he should presume in the frenzy of his fury to slay a parent, then, if the deceased, before his end, freely forgave the criminal his death, he shall be clear when he has accomplished the same purification imposed on the unintentional homicide and performed what else is prescribed for that case. But if such forgiveness be not given, the criminal in this sort shall lie in the danger of more laws than one. He shall lie open to heaviest judgment for violent outrage, and for impiety, and sacrilege to boot; he has done despite to the temple of a parent's soul, whence, were it possible a man should die more than once, it were perfect justice to put the patricide or matricide whose crime was done in passion to repeated deaths. In this sole case, when a man's life is in danger from his parents, no law will permit slaying, not even in self-defense - the slaying of the father or mother to whom his very being is due. The law's command will be that he must endure the worst rather than commit such a crime. How then can he, under the law, fitly receive any judgment but one? Let death, then, be the penalty prescribed for him who in passion takes the life of father or mother.

Plato held that not even the charge of self-defense would permit a child to kill his/her parents. Because the parents gave the child his/her being the child may not take the parents' being from them. This appeal to parents as creators here and elsewhere in Plato appears to show that it is to the concept of gratitude for exis-
tence more than for nurturing that is foremost in Plato's justification of filial obligation. Although we have returned to the notion of gratitude, it is difficult to lay out specifically what a reciprocity notion founded on the parents granting existence to their children would be. We could broaden the notion to call the maintaining of parents as granting them further existence but this would then become reciprocity merely for granting further existence, or in other words, the concept collapses into reciprocity for nurturing.

Plato is careful regarding inheritance for he thinks that being given too much will make children lazy. "Let no man covet wealth for his children's sake, that he may leave them in opulence; 'tis not for their own good not for the state's."198

2. Content of Filial Obligation

Concerning what children should do for parents who have passed away, he says:

But when parents are once no more, the most modest burial is the best. A man should not exceed the customary pomp, nor yet come short of those wherewith his forefathers were wont to entomb their own sires; he should keep also to the same rule in paying the decent annual rites of tendance (sic) to the departed. Above all, he should honor the deceased at all times by keeping the memory of them green, while he expends on them what is proportionate to the means fortune permits him. If we act thus and frame our lives to this model, we shall, one and all, always reap the due reward from heaven and the higher powers, and our days, for the main of life, will be passed with bright hopes.199

Plato states that children must not pass judgment on or interfere with the parents' lives, unless the parent(s) is mentally incapacitated. This does not mean, however, that the child is obligated, in Plato's view, to help them "satisfy desires
that I myself had rather die than be addicted to."^{200}

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

Plato thinks a good law against those who don't show their parents "all lawful honor" is:

If any person in such state be less mindful of his parents than he ought, not showing himself more careful to consider and comply with all their wishes, more than those of his sons and other posterity whatsoever and his own also, he that lies under such neglect may report it, in person or by deputy, to the three senior curators and three of the women who have charge of wedlock.^{201}

This proposed law of Plato's shows that the obligation to one's parents in his thinking superseded all other family obligations, including those to one's own children. This of course is also similar to the ancient Chinese tradition of Confucianism, and to the Jewish tradition. This law also includes a public component, whereby a parent may appeal to legal redress to get the child to fulfill his/her obligations. (Even though the reasoning behind this is moral and the legal redress appears to enforce the moral code, there could still have been the political consideration that if the family did not support their elders, the state would have to.) According to Plato, the penalty for those who either neglected or mis-treated their parents under the laws of a good constitution would include the following: stripes and imprisonment for any man under thirty or woman under forty. If neglect or mis-treatment are reported by children older than this, they shall go before a court of 101 of the oldest citizens, who if they convict the children, shall determine the fine or any other penalty and shall be allowed to impose the stiffest penalty or fine. Furthermore, anyone is obligated to report such treatment if they
know about it, even if they are a slave. The slave who reports this, will be freed, even if he reports on his own master. The interesting part of this concerns the inclusion of women in the description of the penalty. In Plato’s view, women can be accused of mistreating parents and brought before court.

Plato’s views on a person’s responsibility for his parents well-being are analogous to the Chinese. First, because he emphasizes that the individual is not the most important social unit. “You must, however, consider this fact too, that each of us is born not for himself alone. We are born partly for our country, partly for our parents, partly for our friends.”

Further, a child must never betray a parent, even to the state. This is discussed in the Euthyphro dialogue in which Socrates is totally shocked that Euthyphro would prosecute his own father for murder. Socrates says that “I fancy it is not correct for any ordinary person to do that [to prosecute his father on this charge], but only for a man already far advanced in point of wisdom.” This is again similar to the Chinese texts discussed earlier in which Confucius was also against putting the state before filial loyalty.

Finally, Plato says that even if parents are hurtful or "unworthy," a good person does not complain or expose their parent to others.

His (Simonides) view was that a good man often forces himself into love and praise, as when someone’s mother or father or native land is unsympathetic to him. The less worthy, when they find themselves in such a position, seem to accept it happily and expose the unworthiness of parents or country with reproaches and denunciations, so that they may neglect their duty toward them without thereby incurring the blame or reproaches of others. They even exaggerate their censure and add gratuitous hostility to that which cannot be helped. Good men on the other hand conceal such faults and are constrained to praise,
and if they feel anger at some wrong done to them by parents or
country, they calm themselves and seek reconciliation, compelling
themselves to love and praise their own kin."²²⁵

This is of course similar to the prohibition present in the stories in the
**Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Duties** and also in the stories in the Jewish
traditions.

4. Conclusion

Like the Jewish and Islamic tradition, Plato's argument for the basis of filial
obligations appears to be that of gratitude for both creation and care-taking. The
most interesting commonality in terms of content among all the traditions examined
thus far appears to be the universal emphasis on both honor and personal service.
Plato holds that such service should be provided to "minister" to all of parents
needs.

B. Aristotle

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

The writings of Aristotle which concern filial obligation are found in the
**Nicomachean Ethics** (Hereafter, NE). Aristotle holds that children owe their
parents honor, sustenance, and a certain degree of obedience. Aristotle says that
children "honor" parents because they have benefitted the children in important
ways, and further that children love them because they have done these things for
them:

> For [parents] are the greatest benefactors [children have]: they are
> responsible for their being and their nurture, and for their education once
> they have been born. But this kind of friendship has also a higher degree
> of what is pleasant and useful than does friendship with persons outside the
family, in as much as the partners have more of their life in common.\textsuperscript{206}

Parents have benefitted their children by giving them three essential components - life, nurturing and education. Life is as we said before, the pre-condition for the possibility of experiencing anything and therefore assumed by many to be the greatest benefit conferred. Nurturing, or care taking, is the labor intensive long-term work that is essential for a child to grow up and is therefore also of great value. However, this is the first time that education has really been emphasized as a separate benefit that parents confer on children. We recall that among the Greeks a child was excused from filial honor if a father had not taught his son a trade and that in the Judaic tradition a father that did not teach a son a trade was said to have taught him thievery. Aristotle is the first to say that education is a duty of the parents, distinct from simply care taking.

Aristotle says, "those who have done a service to others feel friendship and love for those they have served even if these are not of any use to them and never will be."\textsuperscript{207} Aristotle also thinks that parents love their children more because benefactors in general (and parents are the essential benefactors) love that or who they have helped more than the beneficiary loves the benefactor.

The foundation of filial obligation for Aristotle appears to be that of gratitude for three essential benefits of existence, nurturing, and education. Parents are owed honor, respect and service to the utmost of a person's ability due to their status as a special kind of benefactor. The emphasis on friendship in Aristotle is not necessary to the performance or status of filial obligation, but rather, as Blustein notes;

Aristotle is interested in friendship as a phenomenon of family life because he believes that friendships of a close and intimate kind are a necessary
constituent of the good or eudaemonistic life. Familial friendship is thus not a ground of filial obligation for Aristotle, but the desirable outcome of "children render[ing] to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render[ing] what they should to their children."²⁰⁸

Aristotle thinks that friendship is a virtue or implies a virtue that is necessary for living.²⁰⁹ The Aristotelian concept of friendship, however, is specifically delineated and defined. To be friends, A) men must have mutual good will for one another on the basis of at least one of 3 motives: i) the good, ii) the pleasant and/or iii) the useful; and B) each must be aware of one another's good will.²¹⁰ Friendship therefore requires recognized, mutual goodwill between individuals who consequently spend time together and delight in each other. The ideal form of friendship according to Aristotle is between those who are considered equals because they are alike in excellence or virtue who have the motive of the good.²¹¹ Friendship between unequals is a situation in which virtue or excellence and the function of each partner is different and the cause of affection is different.²¹²

Aristotle holds that nature implants friendship in parents for their children and in children for their parents. He says that we may look to the other species in the world to see that this is the case - birds and most animals.²¹³ Friendship between parents and children (Aristotle speaks only of friendship between fathers and sons, since it is not clear if he extends friendship to women) is friendship between unequals since the father is considered the superior partner.²¹⁴ Since however friendship is marked by justice, friendship between unequals is characterized by each partner receiving what is appropriate to his/her merit, and so each one is treated equally in the friendship.
Concerning this, Aristotle says:

It is clear that the partners do not receive the same thing from one another and should not seek to receive it. But when children render to their parents what is due to those who gave them life, and when parents render what is due to their children, the friendship between them will be lasting and equitable. In all friendships which involve the superiority of one of the partners, the affection, too, must be proportionate: the better and more useful partner should receive more affection than he gives, and similarly for the superior partner in each case. For when the affection is proportionate to the merit of each partner, there is in some sense equality between them. And equality, as we have seen, seems to be part of friendship.215

But, Aristotle also claims that 1) parent knows who their children are better than children know who their parents are. 2) parents feel their children to be theirs more than the children feel that they belong to the parents, and 3) the parents love their children immediately while children take time to distinguish parents from other adults and then to love them. Aristotle says that because the mother has a greater ability than the father to know and feel these things due to pregnancy and labor, she loves the children more than the father.216 He therefore thinks that while the superior partner in a friendship should receive more affection (prescriptive for most friendships of this sort), the parents love their children more than the children love their parents. Aristotle believes that children love their parents because they were born of them but that the love and feeling of the parent is prior to that of the children.217

And again, Aristotle says of the friendship between father and children:

The friendship of a father (for his children) is of the same kind (as that of a monarch), but it differs in the magnitude of benefits bestowed. For he is the author of their being, which is regarded as the greatest good, and he is responsible for maintaining and educating them....Furthermore, it is by nature that a father rules over his children, ancestors over their descendants, and a king over his subjects. Those kinds of friendship depend on
superiority, and that is why we (do not only love but) also honor our parents. Accordingly, in those relationships the same thing is not just for both partners, but what is just depends on worth or merit, and the same is true for friendship.\textsuperscript{218}

In every community there is some form of justice and friendship, for example among fellow-travelers or soldiers. "And the extent of their association is the extent of their friendship, as it is the extent of which justice exists between them."\textsuperscript{219} Claims of friendship differ depending on the how close the association is (the quantity of important things in common) and the intensity of the friendship (quality of things shared).

And the claims of justice differ too; the duties of parents to children and those of brothers to each other are not the same nor those of comrades and those of fellow-citizens, and so, too, with the other kinds of friendship. There is a difference, therefore, also between the acts that are unjust towards each of these classes of associates, and the injustice increases by being exhibited towards those who are friends in a fuller sense; e.g. it is a more terrible thing to defraud a comrade than a fellow-citizen, more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger, and more terrible to wound a father than any one else. And the demands of justice also seem to increase with the intensity of the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice exist between the same persons and have an equal extension.\textsuperscript{220}

The strength of special obligations arises from the intimacy of the shared community. It is most terrible to hurt a parent because association is extremely close and the friendship is very intense.

Aristotle says that all forms of community are part of what he calls the political community. He says that communities each exist with the purpose of obtaining a common advantage, and that the members of the community have in some sense a common goal. Soldiers hope to obtain what is advantageous in war, money or victory, wealth, while other communities aim to obtain pleasure, and others what is good. "All
communities, then, seem to be parts of the political community; and the particular kinds of friendship will correspond to particular kinds of community. The family is then the smallest and closest community in which an individual finds herself. Again, this emphasis on community and the family as a closed social unit is repetitive of some of the important themes in the imperial Chinese tradition.

Aristotle says that there are three kinds of governance, monarchy, aristocracy and timocracy. The best is monarchy and the worst is timocracy. The deviation of monarchy is tyranny, of aristocracy is oligarchy, and timocracy is democracy. A monarch pursues the good for his subjects while the tyrant pursues his own good. Such constitutions are mirrored in the relations within a family. The father is a monarch in regard to his sons, caring for their good and ruling paternaly. Each constitution involves friendship as much as it involves justice. The king confers benefits on his subjects and father confers benefits on his children.

But, the best form of constitution is monarchy and the deviation of this is tyranny. Justice and friendship hardly exist in deviant form. So, may we conclude that there is no friendship or justice between a tyrannical father and his children? It would seem so on Aristotle's view if there was not mutual good will between the parent and child. This might not mean though that the child did not have any obligations toward the parent. If the parent did benefit the child intentionally for the child's sake, then gratitude may be due. If the parent benefitted the child intentionally for some other reason than to purely help the child or if the parent benefitted the child unintentionally, then perhaps the child still owes the parent some kind of repayment of the debt, but certainly not to the extent of filial obligation based upon gratitude in friendship.
2. Content of Filial Obligation

Now, concerning the issue of what a child should do for his parents or which actions are constitutive of giving honor and showing love: "It is disputable whether we ought to measure a service by its utility to the receiver and make the return with a view to that, or by the benevolence of the giver."\(^{226}\) If the friendship aims at utility, says Aristotle, then it is the advantage to the receiver that is measured. However, "In friendships based on virtue on the other hand, complaints do not arise, but the purpose of the doer is a sort of measure; for in purpose lies the essential element of virtue and character."\(^{227}\) Meaning that if the parents had the best intentions, and failed their children, they are still owed something. This is consistent with Aristotle's emphasis on gratitude in friendship since accordingly, good will attends the parents actions to benefit the child.

What unequal friends owe to one another: "The superior partner ought to be given a larger share of honor and the needy partner a larger share of profit. For the reward of excellence and beneficence is honor, whereas profit is the [form taken by] assistance to one in need."\(^{228}\)

Accordingly, this is the basis for relations between unequals. The person who has profited in money or in excellence must give honor in return, for in giving that he gives what it is possible for him to give. Friendship demands the possible; it does not demand what the giver deserves. In some cases, in fact, it is impossible to make the kind of return which the giver deserves, for instance, in the honors we pay to the gods and to our parents. Here no one could ever make a worthy return, and we regard a man as good if he serves them to the best of his ability.

That is why it would seem that a son does not have the right to disown his father, whereas a father has the right to disown his son. A debtor must pay his debt, but nothing a son may have done [to repa his father] is a worthy return for everything his father has provided for him, and therefore he will always be in his debt. But a creditor is free to remit the debt, and
a father likewise. At the same time it seems unlikely that any father would break off relations with his son, unless the son were exceedingly wicked. For apart from the natural friendship [which a father feels for his son], it is only human not to reject the assistance [which a son may offer in old age]. The son, on the other hand, if he is wicked, will regard the task of satisfying his father’s needs as something to be avoided or not to be eagerly pursued. For most people wish to be the recipients of good deeds, but avoid performing them because they are unprofitable. So much, then, on this subject.²²⁹

Two points need to be made here. First, since it is impossible to "make the kind of return", (speaking of course of the magnitude, not the exact benefit) which parents deserve, children serve their duty well, if they serve their parents to the best of their ability. This definitely shows that the Aristotelian foundation of filial obligation is not at all that of reciprocity, but that of gratitude found in a friendship between unequals. Second, that a father may waive the debt but a son cannot is similar to the Judaic tradition which held that fathers could waive their right to honor but that a child could not give up the duty.

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

Now, though children should serve their parents to the best of their ability, what does this mean for the extent of filial obligation? Aristotle asks;

...should a person assign all prerogatives to his father and obey him in everything, or should he put his faith in a doctor when he is ill, and vote for a military expert when he must elect a general? Similarly,...should he render thanks he owes to his benefactor rather than freely give presents to his bosom companion, if he is not in a position to do both?²³⁰

The questions asked are do children owe all honor and obedience to parents and if children cannot give to both parents and others to whom they have obligations, how do they decide? Aristotle answers that while children owe honor to parents, it is only the
honor that is fitting to give those who are parents, not the honor due a wise man, a king, etc. Aristotle even distinguishes between the honor owed to fathers and the honor owed to mothers. 231 He states, "when it comes to providing food it would seem to be our first objective to satisfy the needs of our parents, since we owe it to them and since it is nobler to give this assistance to the authors of our being rather than to ourselves. 232 If the conflict is between providing food to one's parents or to one's children, it is not clear what Aristotle's response would be. An argument could be made that since the debt children owe parents is so great, that parents' needs should come first. However, another argument could be made that since benefactors love more those whom they have benefitted that those who have been helped love those that helped them, and since parents feel that children are a part of themselves, then the children should be chosen over the parents.

4. Conclusion

The Aristotelian understanding of filial obligations appears to also have a basis in gratitude. However, the long discussion of friendship and the assumption of the natural status of filial friendship makes it sound as if Aristotle believes that the duties of filial obligation will for the most part be met by the consequences of friendship between father and son.

C. Saint Thomas Aquinas

Though we discussed some of Aquinas' thought in the Christian section, we will now consider his views more thoroughly. Aquinas bases much of his thought, especially his metaphysical assumptions, on that of Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists, (Porphyry and Boethius). However, his views simultaneously are rooted in the teachings of the Catholic
church and scriptural exegesis. His texts concerning what he call filial piety are found in the *Summa Theologica*. He argues, as we saw in the Christian section, that there is a specific virtue known as piety which is the worship of parents. "Piety is a protestation of the charity we bear towards our parents and country."  

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

Aquinas says that parents are due reverence and service from a child. He says this is because the parents are the "principle of his being." This argument, based in the thought of Aristotle, states that the parents are essentially connected to the child because they gave him his very biological being. Since the child would not exist if it were not for the parents, Aquinas argues that the child was benefitted by those who are called parents. The premise of this argument which is referred to elsewhere is that to bring a person into existence is to benefit her. What follows from the notion of 'to benefit' is that beneficiaries are morally bound to a) give thanks to their benefactors and/or b) to provide help to their benefactors if the benefactor are in need. Aquinas is careful to delineate what he means by these concepts.

As stated above ([Q. 106], Art. 5), gratitude regards the favor received according to the intention of the benefactor; who seems to be deserving of praise, chiefly for having conferred the favor gratis without being bound to do so. Wherefore the beneficiary is under a moral obligation to bestow something gratis in return. Now he does not seem to bestow something gratis, unless he exceeds the quantity of the favor received: because so long as he repays less or an equivalent, he would seem to do nothing gratis, but only to return what he has received. Therefore gratitude always inclines, as far as possible, to pay back something more.

On Aquinas' view, grown children, do not, strictly speaking, owe obedience, but they do owe piety. The nature of piety, as seen above, seems to be very similar to that
of gratitude. Blustein rightly notes that while Aquinas appears at one point to make a distinction between gratitude and piety, piety can be conceived of on his view as "a higher form of gratitude." Blustein says,

> Gratitude does not obligate us to respond to all our benefactors in the same manner, with the same degree of devotion. On the contrary, "the nature of the case requires that a recipient respond to his benefactor in a way that reflects their relationship" (question 106, article 3), and since our relationship with our parents is so closely bound up with who and what we are, more is required to demonstrate our gratitude and appreciation to them than to any other benefactor, with the exception of God. Just what is required of children cannot be determined with the precision that would be possible if filial obligation were a matter of justice, for gratitude looks to the nature of the particular family and of the particular relationships within it, and not, as in the case of justice, to an "equality... of external objects."  

2. Content of Filial Obligation

The child according to Aquinas should respect and honor his father. But what is 'honor'?

Honor denotes a witnessing to a person's excellence. Therefore men who wish to be honored seek a witnessing to their excellence (Aristotle Ethics i.5, viii.8). Now witness is borne either before God or before man. Before God, Who is the searcher of hearts, the witness of one's conscience suffices; Wherefore honor, so far as God is concerned, may consist of the mere internal movement of the heart, for instance when a man acknowledges either God's excellence or another man's excellence before God. But, as regards men, one cannot bear witness, save by means of signs either by words, as when one proclaims another's excellence by word of mouth, or by deeds, for instance by bowing, saluting, and so forth, or by external things as by offering gifts, erecting statues, and the like. Accordingly honor consist of signs, external and corporal.

The benefitted owes the benefactor more. However, as Aristotle said, how can children pay back to parents more than what parents gave them? Aquinas says that this is possible if we consider the "will of the giver and of the repayer."
As stated above ([Q. 106] A.3, ad 5, A.5), in repaying favors we must consider the disposition rather than the deed. Accordingly, if we consider the effect of beneficence, which a son receives from his parents, namely, to be and to live, the son cannot make an equal repayment (Aristotle Ethics 8.14) But if we consider the will of the giver and of the repayer, then it is possible for the son to pay back something greater to his father, as Seneca declares (De Benef. iii). If, however, he were unable to do so, the will to pay back would be sufficient for gratitude.\textsuperscript{242}

So, intentions are what matter most for the discharge of filial obligations for Aquinas. Having the proper disposition and will, similar to the Chinese emphasis, is that which can make the efforts of the son equal that benefit that the father provided.

Aquinas states that children owe assistance and support to parents when the parents are in need of temporary assistance. If the parent is ill, the child should visit him, if poor, the child should support her.\textsuperscript{243}

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

Aquinas argues, though, that scripture tells us that a son should support his parents if they need it, but that the son should not plan or expect to support the parents because "naturally parents are not the successors of their children, but children of their parents."\textsuperscript{244}

Wherefore since our father is related to us as principle, even as God is, it belongs properly to the father to receive honor from his children, and to the children to provided by their parents with what is good for them. Nevertheless in cases of necessity the child is bound out of the favors received to provide for his parents before all.\textsuperscript{245}

And again, he states that "in a case of extreme urgency it would be lawful to abandon one's children rather than one's parents, to abandon whom it is by no means lawful, on account of the obligation we lie under towards them for the benefits we have received
from them.246 In both of these last two quoted sections, Aquinas relies heavily on the writings of Aristotle that we discussed above.

In Question 26, Article 9, however, Aquinas argues that individuals are more closely connected with their children than with their parents for the same three reasons (with the addition of the distinction of the relation "being part of" being a nearer one than the relation "principle") that Aristotle gives. However, Aquinas argues that the parents should be loved more than one loves their children because parents are more like God than the child is, for the father is the more exalted good. The better a thing is, the more like God it is and therefore the more it should be loved.

Aquinas also discusses whether a man ought to love his wife more than his father and mother.247 He argues that parents should be loved more as follows: Scripture says that men ought to love their wives as their own bodies, but they are also told to love their neighbor more than his body.248 Amongst neighbors, he should love his parents most and so therefore men ought to love their parents more than their wives. This argument is problematic however because what follows from the first two premises is not only that men should love their parents more than their wives, but that men should all of their neighbors more than their wives (if man is called to love his body less than his neighbor, then this applies to all neighbors). Surely this conclusion cannot be correct, even for Aquinas, since he argues that we are correct to give preferential treatment to those who are closest to us.249

Aquinas then argues that the degree of love is taken from the good which is loved of, from the union between those who love. On the first condition, parents should be loved more since as principles they are more good. On the second condition, however,
the wife should be loved more because a man's union with her is closer than with the parents. Aquinas concludes, "Consequently a man loves his wife more intensely, but his parents with greater reverence."  

This is close but not exactly similar to the Jewish view which states that a man should love his wife more, but stops short of saying that the parents are due greater reverence.

4. Conclusion

Aquinas supports a conception of filial piety, which analogous to the Chinese, is based upon the natural order that children owe certain duties of honor, respect and care for their parents. Unlike the Chinese, though, the Thomistic position relies heavily upon the gratitude for giving existence basis of filial piety.

D. Hobbes

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

Hobbes' states his view of filial obligations in De Cive, or "The Citizen". His main concern is to discuss the derivation of paternal power, since the family unit as a social and political power structure is often appealed to as a model for civil governance. What then, is the origin of parental power for Hobbes?

1. In the state of nature, all men are equal. However, the "conqueror is lord of the conquered."  

2. "By right therefore of nature, the dominion over the infant first belongs to him who first hath him in his power." This is of course the mother since it is in her immediate power to give nurture or refrain from nurturing ("exposing") the infant.

3. If she nurtures him, she brings him up on this condition - "that being grown to full age he become not her enemy; which is, that he obey her."
4. By nature, we all desire what is seems good to us, and so therefore it would be illogical "that any man hath on such terms afforded life to another, that he might both get strength by his years, and at once become an enemy. But each man is an enemy to that other whom he neither obeys nor commands. And thus in the state of nature, every woman that bears children, becomes both a mother and a lord."254

But the important point for Hobbes is step 3) in our exposition of his position above: the mother brings up the child on the condition that the child will not become her enemy. Hobbes sees the original relation between parent and child based upon a consent by the child to this contractual arrangement. Granted the consent is given in a coercive manner, but the child is still, according to Hobbes' mind, free not to consent to the arrangement. The child agrees when little to always obey and then is held later to this agreement. Even after the child is a free adult, he/she still must honor the parent and not turn against them based upon this original agreement.

The enfranchised son or released servant, do now stand in less fear of their lord and father, being deprived of his natural and lordly power over them, and (if regard be had to true and inward honour) do honour him less than before. For honour (as hath been said in the section above) is nothing else but the estimation of another's power; and therefore he that hath least power, hath always least honour. But it is not to be imagined that the enfranchiser ever intended so to match the enfranchised with himself, as that he should not so much as acknowledge a benefit, but should so carry himself in all things, as if he were become wholly his equal. It must therefore be ever understood, that he who is freed from subjection, whether he be a servant, son, or some colony, doth promise all those external signs at least, whereby superiors used to be honoured by their inferiors. From whence it follows, that the precept of honouring our parents, belongs to the law of nature, not only under the title of gratitude, but also of agreement.255

The gratitude component mentioned above is a result of the fact that the child accepts the benefits that the parents bestow on him/her. Therefore, even if there were not this
contractual agreement, Hobbes would argue that the child gave his consent to the situation by accepting the benefits. Blustein says that in this case, "children oblige themselves according to the fourth law of nature (Hobbes' Leviathan, pt. 1, ch. 15), the law of gratitude, which requires" anyone who benefits another from good will not to repent his act. Blustein argues that the existence of the political state really nullifies the adversarial parent-child relation component, thereby leaving only the argument from gratitude as the foundation of filial obligation for Hobbes.  

2. Content and Extent of Filial Obligation

Hobbes argues that filial obligations include honor and obedience. The extent of each however is not pursued by him. His argument which grounds filial obedience to the original contract appears to support a view which states that the adult child must never do anything which would harm the parent. The very least that we could take this to mean is that of physical harm and further, that the child was obligated to protect the parent from any harm. It would be difficult to argue that Hobbes included in this notion mental, much less emotional, harm, since the very nature of his original contract presumes an adversarial relationship between the parent and child.

3. Women and Filial Obligation

It is the mother to whom Hobbes attributes initial power over the infant since it is by her say that men even know who the father of a particular infant is. The inequality of the natural forces he says is not that wide that the father is the natural superior of women. In addition, Hobbes points to examples in history of women who have waged war and disposed of children, Amazons. "Wherefore original dominion over children belongs to the mother: and among men no less than other creatures, the birth follows the
Accordingly, says Hobbes, the mother gives up her "right" to dominion if she exposes the child. Whoever raises the child that a mother abandoned, then has the same dominion over it that the mother once had.

For that life which the mother had given it (not by getting, but nourishing it), she now by exposing takes from it; wherefore the obligation also which arose from the benefit of life, is by this exposition made void. Now the preserved oweth all to the preserver, whether in regard of education as to a mother, or of his service as to a lord. For although the mother in the state of nature, where all men have a right to all things, may recover her son again (namely, by the same right that anybody else might do it), yet may not the son rightly transfer himself again unto his mother.

If the mother is under someone else's power, then the children must obey and will come under the power of that person because they are the mother's property. If she is prisoner, subject under government, or if she gives herself to a man. But if the women is herself a ruler and the man not, then the children are hers. But if the couple is married in the eyes of the government, then the children are the father's, "because in all cities, to wit constituted of fathers, not mothers governing their families, the domestical command belongs to them man."

Now...the mother is originally lord of her children, and from her the father, or somebody else by derived right, it is manifest that the children are no less subject to those by whom they are nourished and brought up, than servants to their lords, and subjects to him who bears the supreme rule; and that a parent cannot be injurious to his son, as long as he is under his power. A son also is freed from subjection in the same manner as a subject and servant are. For emancipation is the same thing with manumission, and abdication with banishment.

The origin then of patriarchal family structure is according to Hobbes, that the mother gives control of herself to a man, usually the father and thereby he has power
over her and all that she possessed, including her children. Hobbes says, like Plato and Aristotle, that the family is a government like a monarchy. 262

4. Conclusion

For Hobbes, filial obligations are grounded either in a contractual agreement between child and parent made implicitly by child when young, or rather it is the result of gratitude. The content includes honor and some degree of obedience (through which service is implied).

E. Locke

1. Basis of Filial Obligation

Locke discusses his views on filial concerns in Some Thoughts Concerning Education, (hereafter, Education) and most explicitly in the Second Treatise of Government, (hereafter, STG) chapter VI, "Of Paternal Power".

But though there be a time when a child comes to be as free from subjection to the will and command of his father, as the father himself is free from subjection to the will of any body else, and they are each under no other restraint, but that which is common to them both, whether it be the law of nature, or municipal law of their country; yet this freedom exempts not a son from that honour which he ought, by the law of God and nature, to pay his parents. God having made the parents instruments in his great design of continuing the race of mankind, and the occasions of life to their children; as he hath laid on them an obligation to nourish, preserve, and bring up their offspring; so he has laid on the children a perpetual obligation of honouring their parents, which containing in it an inward esteem and reverence to be shewn (sic) by all outward expressions, ties up the child from any thing that may ever injure or affront, disturb or endanger, the happiness or life of those from whom he received his; and engages him in all actions of defense, relief, assistance and comfort of those, by whose means he entered into being, and has been made capable of any enjoyments of life: from this obligation no state, no freedom can absolve children. But this is very far from giving parents a power of command over their children, or an authority to make laws and dispose as they please of their lives or liberties. It is one thing to owe honour, respect, gratitude and assistance; another to require an absolute obedience and submission. The honour due to parents, a monarch
in his throne owes his mother; and yet this lessens not his authority, nor subjects him to her government.  

Locke’s philosophy is that all men are created equal, except that we are not born in a full state of equality. The role of the parents, their duty, is to rule over children and make decisions for them which are in their interests, until such time as they are fully capable of taking care of themselves. Children were considered at "liberty to dispose of his actions and possessions according to his own will" when they had obtained the capacity to know the law, or in other words, to reason. When they recognize the law under which they must operate and is capable of disposing themselves and their possessions within that law, then they are free from parental authority. In civil society, at least in Locke’s time, men were legally recognized as having attained this state at the age of twenty-one. Locke believes that if a person never obtains this state, either 1) lunatics and idiots 2) children 3) madmen, then he must remain under the parents dominion.

In his discussion of why fathers have dominion over children, Locke says that power does not belong to the father by a right of nature (meaning generation) but only as he is the care taker of the children. This appears to be in conflict with all the other passages in this section: power over children arises from duty to take care of children. Duty given by God or from the act of creating the child. Power only as a care taker. But the care taker part is from god, or having brought children into existence.

When children are grown, though, children "should look on them as their best, as their only sure friends: and, as such, love and reverence them." He says that grown
children and parents should be friends. This is accomplished by gradually relaxing the strong authority as they increase in age and understanding and then seeking their advice and council. Friendship develops as the parents share of themselves as people and as they offer advice as a friend of more experience. Friendship then is not a basis of filial obligations, but a fortunate result. This is similar to what Aristotle said.

The father has another power which can secure the obedience of his children, to give them inheritance. He can use this to require obedience even when children are past minority. Locke equates his versions of honor and respect with the Aquinas notion of piety.

"If the love of you make them not obedient and dutiful; if the love of virtue and reputation keep them not in laudable courses; I ask, what hold will you have upon them, to turn them to it? Indeed, fear of having a scanty portion, if they displease you, may make them slaves to your estate; but they will be nevertheless ill and wicked inprovate (sic), and that restraint will not last always."

2. Content of Filial Obligation

After they pass minority, children are not held to be obedient to their parents however they should care and love them. This is unlike the Chinese who emphasis both obedience and submission because family and state come first. Locke is most definitely the herald of the individual’s rights.

And that duty which is comprehended in the word honour, requires less obedience, though the obligation be stronger on grown, than younger children: for who can think the command, Children obey your parents, requires in a man, that has children of his own, the same submission to his father, as it does in his yet young children to him; and that by this precept he were bound to obey all his father’s commands, if, out of a conceit of authority, he should have the indiscretion to treat him still as a boy?
Filial obligations for adult children on Locke's view do not include obedience, however such obligations do include honor and respect.

and the *honour due from a child*, places in the parents a perpetual right to respect, reverence, support and compliance too, more or less, as the father’s care, cost, and kindness in his education, has been more or less.\textsuperscript{274}

These obligations also include physical and financial support if the parents are in need. Children,

indispensably owe parents [in] all their life-time and in all estates, with all support and defense is due to them. ... Such support can never be mitigated.\textsuperscript{275}

3. Extent of Filial Obligation

So, ever though obedience to father ends when son is of age, honor always is due. "He has no dominion over his son’s property, or actions; nor any right, that his will should prescribe to his son’s in all things; however it may become his son in many things, not very inconvenient to him and his family, to pay a reverence to it."\textsuperscript{276} In other words, it would be nice if the son did it even though he is not strictly speaking, required to do so.

"it (the duty to honor parents) is so inseparable from them both, that the father’s authority cannot dispossess the mother of this right, not can any man discharge his son from *honouring* her that bore him."\textsuperscript{277} Father cannot waive the right of honor. This is different from the Judaic tradition which said that father could waive honor. The obligation of children is corresponding to the obligation of parents, but not I think predicated upon it.
A man may owe _honour_ and respect to an ancient, or wise man; defense to his child or friend; relief and support to the distressed; and gratitude to a benefactor, to such a degree, that all he has, all he can do, cannot sufficiently pay it: but all these give no authority, no right, to any one, of making laws over him from whom they are owing. And it is plain, all this is due not only to the bare title of father; not only because, as has been said, it is owing to the mother too; but because these obligations to parents, and the degrees of what is required of children, may be varied by the different care and kindness, trouble and expense, which is often employed upon one child more than another.\footnote{278}

But if parents (Locke says father) do not take care of the children, including _education_ as well as nutrition, he loses power over them. "it belongs as much to the _foster-father_ of an exposed child, as to the _natural father_ of another."\footnote{279} This is similar to the Greek requirement that fathers must give their children (sons) a proper education or forfeit their rights to filial respect and services.

4. Women and Filial Obligation

Locke says at one place that "paternal" power is really a misnomer since the mother has an equal claim to power in the family. He specifically says that "for whatever obligation nature and the right of generation lays on children, it must certainly bind them equal to both the concurrent causes of it."\footnote{280} He continues to say that the law of God also commands obedience and the like to both parents always. There are two important points to be made here. First, Locke differs, as we have seen, with the view of Hobbes in regard to the power of the mother over her children for Hobbes thought that the mother had originally more power over the children than the father. Whereas Locke believes the standing of the parents to be equal based upon the natural order of needing both male and female to produce an offspring, Hobbes believes that the mother’s contribution is in excess of that of the father’s and in fact more secure (mothers know
which children are theirs better than fathers know that a child is their offspring) due to
the more intimate physical relation. (This debate is often repeated in present day
discussions concerning the extent of fathers' rights in abortion decisions.)

5. Conclusion

Locke argues that filial obligation is grounded equally in the concepts of gratitude
for existence and for care taking. He also includes that reverence should be internally
experienced as well as an outwardly correct behavior. Filial responsibility includes,
honor reverence, and service.

IV. Conclusion

The findings of this limited historical survey may be best summarized by the
following chart:

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW OF
SELECTED APPROACHES TO FILIAL OBLIGATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITION</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>EXTENT</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>Respect; service; burial rites; obedience</td>
<td>Child is exempt if parents were remiss in duty</td>
<td>Help with duties of husband; only father esteemed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADITION</td>
<td>SOURCE</td>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>EXTENT</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>&quot;Natural Order&quot;</td>
<td>Respect; service; worship of dead; obedience; love &amp; kindness; maintain good reputation</td>
<td>Child never exempt, even if parents negligent; obligation supersedes that to spouse, own children &amp; government</td>
<td>After marriage oblig. to parents is replaced by oblig. to in-laws; bond to mother-in-law more important than marital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Gratitude (for existence with appeals to caretaking)</td>
<td>Honor; service; respect; kindness; limited obedience</td>
<td>Service ought to be personal but exceptions noted; obligation only superseded by religious obligation</td>
<td>Oblig. to own parents remain with addition of helping husband; mother held in equal esteem with father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Gratitude (for existence, also appeals to charity &amp; self-sacrifice)</td>
<td>Honor; service; obedience</td>
<td>If parents do not lead against religious oblig., child must care for them; oblig. not based on parents fulfilling own duties to child</td>
<td>Father and mother held equal honor and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Gratitude (for caretaking with appeals gratitude for existence) Also, for religious reward</td>
<td>Honor; service; kindness; obedience</td>
<td>Service &amp; obedience for as long as parents live; only superseded by religious obligation</td>
<td>Mother has elevated status over father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADITION</td>
<td>SOURCE</td>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>EXTENT</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>Gratitude (for existence and for caretaking)</td>
<td>Honor; personal service</td>
<td>Unlimited, except for obedience; obligation above that to own children; no self-defense if parent tried to kill or hurt child</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle</td>
<td>Gratitude (for existence, for care-taking, and for education, with emphasis on gratitude for existence); &quot;Natural order&quot; and friendship</td>
<td>Honor; limited obedience</td>
<td>Provide sustenance to father before anyone else</td>
<td>Mothers' connection to children stronger than that to their husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquinas</td>
<td>Gratitude (for existence with appeals to for care-taking)</td>
<td>Honor; limited obedience</td>
<td>Provide for parents above all others</td>
<td>Child ought to love father more than mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbes</td>
<td>Gratitude (for care-taking); Agreement in social contract</td>
<td>Honor; obedience which includes service</td>
<td>Must never do anything to harm parents; honor less when no longer under power of father but still ought to show sign of respect</td>
<td>Mother has more power than adult child, unless she is under someone else's power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The justifications offered for filial obligations have included arguments from reciprocity (classical Greece), gratitude (Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hobbes, and Locke.), and the role of friendship (Aristotle to some degree, Locke to a greater extent). As can be seen from the above, a particular justification of filial obligation will have direct consequences for the extent of the obligation.

The arguments for the content of filial obligations appear to be relatively similar for each tradition, even when the source of the obligation is different. As seen thus far, filial obligation has been understood to include the obligations of honor, respect, reverence, physical and emotional support as well as financial assistance. Both honor and service are argued for by each tradition. Also, it is very interesting that all traditions support the view that filial obligations are more compelling than obligations that individuals have to their young children.

The inclusion of the role of women in this historical survey was an attempt to include both all children and all kinds of filial obligations. I was interested in whether the nature of the obligation was argued to be a different obligation across genders. An historical survey is useful when trying to understand the present sociological phenomenon of the predominance of adult daughters as parental care givers. Unfortunately, this
dissertation will not be able to fully develop such work.

In Chapter Three, we will critically examine these justifications and the various arguments offered in defence of each. The argument from gratitude will be especially scrutinized. As seen above, this justification has been argued for in a number of ways. Arguments differ notably on the specific aspect of parental contribution a child should be (most) grateful for – existence, nurturing, and/or education. Determining what a child ought to be grateful for and how this translates to obligations to parents is of both theoretical and practical importance. The most defensible argument(s) for the grounding of filial obligations will then be examined fully in Chapter Four.
NOTES


4. Flaceliere, 80.

5. Diogenes Laertius, Part I, 7, 55, cited by Bessie Ellen Richardson, Old Age Among the Ancient Greeks (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 56.


8. Isaeus, Part II, 10-12, cited by Lacey, 117.


11. Lacey, 116.

12. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1913 edition, s.v. "Family (Greek)."

13. Flaceliere, 80.


15. Antiphanes, 263, cited by Dover, 274.


17. Aristophanes, Birds, 757, cited by Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1913, s.v. "Old Age (Greek)."

18. Diogenes Laertes, I, 7, 55, cited by Richardson, 56.
19. It is difficult to determine whether a discussion of Confucian thought should rightly fall under the "Cultural" or "Religious" subheading. I have put it under the cultural subheading because it is, by definition, different from the traditional western understanding of religion and because even after its importance as a religious influence faded, its cultural significance remained.

20. There were two main schools of Confucian thought; The first and dominant one was that advanced by Confucius' disciple, Mencius, who believed that humans were essentially good and had a natural inclination to be good. The second and subordinate school was lead by Hsun-tzu, who held that humans were essentially selfish and that their nature is bad. The view discussed in this section will be that of Mencius, who lead the predominant school.


22. Ivan Chen, Translator, The Book of Filial Duty (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1908), 7-14. The Book of Filial Duty is most probably from the third century B.C., Han Dynasty [206 B.C. - 222 A.D.]. It is attributed to the work of an unknown pupil of Tseng Ts'an, who was a disciple of Confucius.

23. FD, 16.


25. I am grateful to Dr. Ruiping Fan for pointing out to me that there is some debate about this point among some Chinese scholars. Some of these scholars it seems think that Confucius himself identified Jen as something achieved in social and familial lives by complying with li. There may be some difference between Confucius and his leading disciple, Mencius over this issue.

26. Smith, 112.

27. Smith, 113.

28. Smith, 112.


33. FD, 25.

34. FD, 17.

35. FD, 26.

36. Mencius, bk. IV, pt. I, ch. XIX.


38. "The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Duty" were taught to children when they were three or four years old so that the "proper attitudes" were "inculcated" (Smith, 216).


40. Personal communication with Professor Richard Smith.


42. The Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, chapter iii, article 22.

43. Confucius, book XIII, chapter XVIII.

44. FD, 33-59.

45. Mencius, book iv, part ii, chapter xxxii, underlining added.

46. FD, 48.

47. Confucius, book XIII, chapter XVIII.

48. Dr. Ruiping Fan has pointed out here that, at least in practical life, it is usually said that allegiance is the most important of all virtues, at least in the situation of war. His view here is in keeping with the view expressed by some who have proposed that the state took the stance that filial obligations were importance for the political reason that if the young men were busy taking care of and worrying about their fathers and ancestors, they would not have time nor fervent interest to get involved in politics and insurgency.

49. FD, 22.


52. The Civil Code of the Republic of China, article 1115.


55. Levy, 87.

56. Levy, 87.

57. FD, 45.


59. Pan Chao, in Swann, p. 88.

60. Oral Communication with Professor Smith.

61. What makes this similarity even more intriguing is that there exists only a very low probability that these two documents, or even cultures, could have exchanged such a story between them.

62. Gerald Blidstein, Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975), xi. We will be consulting Blidstein’s work continually throughout this section as his appears to be the only explicit source on the complete view of the Jewish tradition on this subject.


64. Kid. 29a & 30b.


66. Blidstein, 45.


68. Blidstein, 44.

69. See Blidstein, 132 and note # 37, 211. This includes children born as a result of incest and adultery, called mamzer, as well as those children born merely out of wedlock.
70. Blidstein, 132; notes 37-40, 211.
71. Ecclesiasticus 3:3-18.
72. Deuteronomy 5:16.
74. Blidstein, 46.
75. *The Babylonian Talmud*, Kid. 31b.
76. Blidstein, 47.
77. *Menorat ha-Ma'or*, 15-16, cited by Blidstein, 53.
78. Blidstein, 109-121.
80. Blidstein, 50.
82. *The Babylonian Talmud*, Kid. 31a-31b.
83. Blidstein, 54.
84. Blidstein, 55.
86. *The Babylonian Talmud*, Kid. 31b.
88. Blidstein, 56.
89. *Yam Shel Shelomoh*, Kiddushin, 1:72, cited by Blidstein, 112.
90. Blidstein, 110.
91. Blidstein, 114.

95. Blidstein, 118.

96. Blidstein, 118.

97. Exodus 21:15,17.


101. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 32a.

102. Blidstein, 81-82.

103. Kiddushin 32a, cited by Blidstein, 82.

104. Blidstein, 83.

105. Blidstein, 93.


107. Blidstein, 89.

108. Blidstein, 84.

109. Blidstein, 89.

110. Blidstein, 89.

111. Blidstein, 96.

112. Blidstein, 97.

113. Blidstein, 76.

114. Blidstein, 80.

115. Midrash ha-Gadol, Exodus, 8, cited by Blidstein, 120.


117. Kidd. 32a, cited by Blidstein, 61.
118. Bliedstein, p. 66.
119. Bliedstein, 73.
120. Exodus 20:12.
121. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 30b.
122. Leviticus 19:3.
123. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 30b-31a.
124. Bliedstein, 32.
126. Bliedstein, 98.
127. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 29a.
128. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 30b.
131. New World Dictionary Concordance to the New American Bible, s.v. "Love."
137. 2 Corinthians 12:14.

138. A qualified exception should be made regarding the separation of the "philosophical" treatment of filial obligations from the "cultural" and/or "religious". The views and arguments of Saint Thomas Aquinas concerning piety will be included in the Christian discussion of the religious section, although a more complete treatment of his views will also appear in the philosophical section. This exception is justified due to his enormous influence on especially Catholic moral teachings. Aquinas is one of the major influences on the tradition of Catholic moral theology and is a principle commentator (along with Augustine, Ambros and Peter Lombard) on scriptural interpretation. He applied the natural moral philosophy of Aristotle to
Christian teachings and Revelation. It is therefore a matter of some debate whether Aquinas is primarily a philosopher or a theologian. I have chosen to handle this issue by including him in both sections as appears relevant.


143. Mark 10:19.

144. Mark 7:8-14; cf. Matt. 15:3-6.


146. 1 Tim. 5:4.

147. 2 Tim. 3:2.

148. 1 Tim. 5:1-2.

149. 1 Tim. 5:8.

150. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 4, 1628.

151. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 4, 1628.

152. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 4, 1628.

153. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 2, 1626.

154. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 4, 1628.


161. Khan, Bab Ma Warada Fi Birr Al-Walidah, 237, cited by Schleifer, 12.

162. Kanz, v. 16, 472 (No. 45504), cited by Schleifer, 12.


164. The Message of the Qur'an, 2:83.


170. Sahih Muslim, v. 2, Kitab Al-'Iman, Bab Afdal Al-A'mal, 73, cited by Schleifer, 10.

171. Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, An-Nasa'i and At-Tirmidhi) [Khan, Bab Ma Warada Fi Birr Al-Walidah, 236 cited by Schleifer, 10-11.

172. Abu Ya'la and At-Tabarani) [Khan, Bab Ma Warada Fi Birr Al-Walidain, 514 cited by Schleifer, 11.


175. The Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 31b.

176. (Muslim) [Sahih Muslim, v. 7, Kitab Az-Zakat, Bab Fadl An-Nafaqah Wa As-Sadaqah 'Ala Al-Aqrabin Wa Az-Zauj Wa Al-Awlad, 89, cited by Schleifer, 14-15.

178. I am grateful to Professor Sanders for this interpretation.


180. The Message of the Qur'an, 26:83.


184. (Muslim) Sahih Muslim, v. 7, Kitab Al-Jana'iz, Bab Isti'dhan An-Nabi...Rabbahu Fi Ziyarat Qabr Ummihi, 45 cited by Schleifer, 25.


186. The Message of the Qur'an, 29:8; 31:15.


189. Schleifer, 21.

190. Abu Al-Hasan Muslim Ibn Al Hajjaj, Sahih Muslim: Bi Sharh An-Nawawi (Egypt, 1924), v. 16, Kitab Al-Birr Wa As-Silah Wa Al-Adab, 102, cited by Schleifer, 8.


193. Plato Laws book iv, 717 c,d,& e, emphasis added.

194. Plato Laws 931 d & e.

195. Plato Laws 930e.


197. Plato Laws book IX, 869 a,b & c.


199. Plato Laws Book iv, 717 e, 718 a.
200. Plato Epistle VII, 331 c.
201. Plato Laws Book XI, 932b.
203. Plato Euthyphro 4a.
204. Plato Euthyphro 4b.
205. Plato Protagoras 346a & b.
206. Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 1162a 5.
207. Aristotle NE 1167b 33.
208. Aristotle NE (1158b22), cited by Blustein, 46.
209. Aristotle NE 1155a1.
211. Aristotle NE 1156 b6.
212. Aristotle NE 1158b11.
213. Aristotle NE 1155a16.
214. Aristotle NE 1158b11.
215. Aristotle NE 1158b20, emphasis added.
218. Aristotle NE 1161a 15.
219. Aristotle NE 1159b27.
220. Aristotle NE 1160a 1-5.
221. Aristotle NE 1160a 30.
222. Aristotle NE 1160a 33 - 1160b 1-20.
223. Aristotle NE 1160b30.

225. Aristotle NE 1161a32.


228. Aristotle NE 1163b 2.


230. Aristotle NE 1164b22.


233. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 3, 1627.

234. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 2.

235. Though it is possible to interpret this passage to mean that the parents essentially and uniquely contributed to the type or kind of person that the child had become, we can assume that this is not what Aquinas meant here since in another section he defines what he means:

For father and mother are loved as principles of out natural origin. Now the father is principle in a more excellent way than the mother, because he is the active principle, while the mother is a passive and material principle....In the begetting of man, the mother supplies the formless matter of the body; and the latter receives its form through the formative power that is in the semen of the father. And thought this power cannot create the rational soul, yet it disposes the matter of the body to receive that form [Q. 26, Art. 10, 1296].

236. Aquinas, Question 31, Article 3; Question 106, Article 3.


238. Blustein, 61.

239. Aquinas, Question 106, Article 6, cited by Blustein, 61-61.

240. Aquinas, Question 26, Article 9.

241. Aquinas, Question 103, Article 1.
243. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 2.
244. Aquinas, Question 101, Article 2.
245. Aquinas, Question 26, Article 9.
246. Aquinas, Question 31, Article 3.
247. Aquinas, II-II, Question 26, Article 11.
249. Aquinas, II-II, Question 31, Article 3.
250. Aquinas, II-II, Question 26, Article 11.


256. Blustein, 72-74.
257. Blustein, 74.


266. Locke, *Education*, ch. vi, sec. 58.
270. Locke, *Education*, sec. 73.
278. Locke, *Education*, ch. vi, sec. 70.
CHAPTER THREE

ARGUMENTS FOR THE MORAL GROUNDING OF FILIAL OBLIGATIONS

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter we identified a number of candidates as possible foundations for filial obligations. The Greek tradition claimed a reciprocity-based justification. The imperial Chinese tradition, the only non-Western view represented, held that filial obligation itself is the foundation of all other obligations. Among the different traditions, gratitude was cited most often as the grounding for filial obligations, however the cause for gratitude and the arguments given in its favor varied widely.

In this chapter, we will examine the candidates discussed in chapter two, along with other worthy ones. This process will show that all previous arguments and justifications are inadequate attempts to ground filial obligations.

We must, unfortunately, omit a discussion of filial obligations based on the Chinese view. Such an analysis would be unhelpful to this work and would be beyond the scope of this project. The lack of common theoretical pre-commitments and analytic methodology between this view and the other Western views discussed largely accounts for this difficulty.¹

The next section of this chapter presents an analysis of the arguments from personal identity, reciprocity, and friendship. Each will be shown to be an insufficient basis for grounding filial obligations. The section following that will consider the most
promising arguments from gratitude. Different versions of the gratitude argument will be discussed and analyzed.

For each justification or theory, we will present the argument, the implications of the view, and the criticisms which show its failure to justify filial obligations. In addition, each theory has implications for (exclusively) biological parents as well as for (exclusively) caretaking parents. These implications will be considered separately for each theory.

Lastly, we must clarify that the theories which ground filial obligations ought do so independently of affect or emotion. As discussed in Chapter One, the obligation we are seeking to justify is one that is still present when positive and/or intimate feelings for or about parents are absent. However, the fact that obligations obtain without feelings, does not mean that the obligations supplant, suppress or in any way negate the feelings that we claim are appropriate to possess towards one’s parents. It would be inconsistent to the nature and intent of such obligations for them to undermine such an obvious good. Furthermore, to negate such feelings might in fact be counterproductive, making filial obligations more difficult to meet. Therefore, though we may claim that filial obligations are not themselves based (solely) upon feelings, we may at least hold that the foundation for filial obligations ought to be compatible with filial feeling.
II. The Alternative Arguments

A. The Argument from Personal Identity

1. Definition

The argument from personal identity, has been identified in recent philosophical literature to justify filial obligations. The version discussed here is proposed by Raymond Belliotti. Personal identity, as discussed here, refers to the psychological and biological components that cohere together to make an individual the unique person he is. Belliotti argues for a different view of the self than is usually presupposed. He is critical of what he calls the "atomistic" view of the self. One’s self, he argues, is not formed in isolation from others, but rather as a result of the influences and relations to others around one. One’s close connection with these others leads to the views that their interests are intimately connected and important for own interests and further, that their contribution to one’s very self leads to moral requirements.

Belliotti proposes two principles that underlay the argument from personal identity:

The Contribution of Self Principle
(CSP): If person N either has made or is making a contribution to person P’s personal identity either by (a) genetic contribution or (b) being an attachment or commitment or (c) contributing a property constitutive of P’s personal identity, then P owes a prima facie moral requirement of care to N. The relative strength of the requirement owed is proportionate to the extent of N’s contribution to P’s personal identity at the time of calculation.

and

The Metaphysical Proximity Principle
(MPP): If person N is metaphysically closer to P (N is "like" P) than the metaphysical proximity of person X to P (X is not like P), then P is morally permitted to advance the interests of N rather than the interests of X.
The first principle, CSP, provides the claim for why children have obligations to parents and the second principle, MPP, provides the reason why children are morally permitted to give priority to filial obligations and filial interests when they conflict with other interests. Belliotti both develops and specifies these principles through application to examples and counter-examples.

He holds that CSP and MPP are overridden if these principles are satisfied by N in morally wrong or inappropriate ways.

2. Argument

The argument from personal identity claims that obligations are due to parents based upon their contribution to a child’s personal identity.

a. Individual identities are shaped and molded by the experiences and influences that a person has had in life.

b. There are moral requirements of a special sort to those who contribute to and help nurture our identities, and those whose attachment is essential for our self-understanding.\(^5\)

c. The greatest influence, biologically and socially, on a person is her parents.

d. Therefore, we have moral requirements towards our parents based upon their contribution to our identities.\(^6\)

3. Implications

The general implications of the personal identity argument for filial obligations include that the strength and extent of the obligation is proportionate to and determined
by the extent to which a parent has contributed to and nurtured his child's self-identity. This contribution may take the form of an emotional, genetic, and/or environmental influence. Therefore, if the parent has contributed positively to the identity of the child on all three axes, obligations towards him will be more compelling and more extensive than those due to a parent who contributed, for example, on a solely biological or genetic level. Additionally, a more extensive social interaction which affects a child will engender more extensive obligations to the person who provided this than to another less involved.

The argument then pertains to anyone who shapes or influences another in a profound way, emotionally and environmentally. Due to the continuum of CSP, filial obligations would not be a special category of obligation, rather merely the obligations from personal identity which pertain to one's parents.

a. for (exclusively) biological parents

Biological parents who had no part in child rearing may be the recipients of filial obligations. This is inherent in the argument given above in which biological contributions and influences are viewed as shaping personal identity. Examples of parents who may be due filial obligations include a woman who places her child for adoption and a man who donates sperm to a sperm bank. Belliotti claims that the prevailing intuition that nothing is due to merely biological parents is supported by the atomistic view of the self.

Those who subscribe to the atomistic self assume unanimously that the volitional acts of self create moral requirements - "My expressions of free will and choice are morally binding." But if the acts of self create moral requirements, why cannot the self itself create moral requirements by its
very nature - being one kind of self rather than another; being comprised of certain "constituents" rather than others. I would argue that the acts of self both manifest who we are and help forge who we are to become; and if the acts of self can create moral requirements (as is universally accepted) then the (other) constituents of self can also. Thus, as my biological parents' genetic contribute provides a most enduring aspect of who "I" am, I owe them certain moral requirements.

What about the case where the biological parental contribution does not have a positive value but rather a negative one, such as "bad" genes? Belliotti argues this argument has no weight because if the discussion is about genes that lead to retardation, then this child lacks the "required capacities to be responsible for his actions and no problem arises in connection with his moral requirements to parents." This, of course, is not an adequate response since he does not address the fact that there are degrees of retardation with various levels of cognition and ability for abstract thought. Additionally, there are other instances of "bad" genes, such as those which may lead to physical impairments without mental impairment.

A more forceful response than Belliotti's to the counter-argument of bad genes, is that for the most part, even if there are handicaps, or negative contributions, the child still has life due to the parent. How can a child be upset or even meaningfully claim that they don't owe their parents anything because of genetic defeats when she would not exist if not for her parents "contribution" of life? Only in an extreme case in which life would not be worth living, could one claim that nothing is due to the biological parent because this influence on identity is negative. There are two cases of this kind: With the first, a person's judgment is clouded or they are mentally incapacitated to make this choice. With the second, a person truly holds this view. In cases of the second type,
which we believe for the most part are admittedly rare, we will have to make a special exception. For those for whom coming into existence is not a benefit, there is no obligation present.\textsuperscript{10} On the view from the personal identity argument then, moral requirements to biological parents exist, but they are not absolute.

b. for (exclusively) caretaking parents

The argument from personal identity holds that filial obligations are due to caretaking parents to the extent that they shaped a child’s identity. Belliotti argues that “children owe parents a moral requirement of care even though their parents did not contribute only positive aspects of the child’s personality and identity that the child also happens to like. Because sentiment does not of itself create or destroy moral requirements under my view, it is irrelevant that a child doesn’t like certain of her characteristics that can be traced (in part) back to her parents” (B. p, 155). This means that subjective determinations of the value of the contribution do not matter under Belliotti’s view (and hence would hold true for the suicidal case mentioned above). The argument from personal identity is equipped, though, to respond to the charge of parents whose contribution harms a child. If the parents satisfy MPP and CSP in morally wrong ways, then the principles are overridden.

Let us consider cases where the caretaker is harmful or negligent of the child. Belliotti claims that in the case of parents who have neglected or abused their children, either of two positions may be assumed: "(i) the parents in such situations 'forfeit' that to which they would be ordinarily entitled or (ii) the \textit{prima facie} moral requirements are overridden (but not forfeited, strictly speaking) by the parent's immoral behavior. That
is, they neither deserve nor are entitled to their children’s consideration which would normally be morally required. ”

The second position, (ii), could also fit the case of the parent who contributed negative aspects to the child’s identity.

4. Criticisms

Initial difficulties with the argument from personal identity are found in the CSP:

If person N either has made or is making a contribution to person P’s personal identity either by (a) genetic contribution or (b) being an attachment or commitment or (c) contributing a property constitutive of P’s personal identity, then P owes a prima facie moral requirement of care to N.

Belliotti claims that if a person contributes to another’s personal identity, the latter has obligations to care for the former. If, as he says, this is not a sacrifice theory (caring for them because they cared for you), then it is not sufficiently clear why care, in particular is due. Moreover, even assuming care, what kinds of care, are due to these individuals?

Notwithstanding the above criticism, there is still another question. The contribution that is made to another’s personal identity may be positive or negative according to this principle. It is possible to conceive of a objectively negative contribution, not necessarily immoral (and thus not overriding the principle of CSP), that a parent may make to a child. On this view, the child owes filial obligation to these parents in proportion to the extent of their contribution. This means, paradoxically, that
the parent with a great negative contribution to a child's personal identity may be due
more extensive filial obligations than a parent who contributed a lesser but positive aspect
to their child's personal identity.

To account for this implication, Belliotti might be moved to amend CSP to state:

If person N either has made or is making a positive contribution to person

P's personal identity either by...

This would, though, change the argument from saying that personal identity is the
motivation for filial obligations to one saying that only a positive contribution to personal
identity engenders such obligations. The positive contribution in this case is seen as a
benefit to the person. This means that the argument is really one based upon the benefit
of personal identity to the child, for which the child may owe something like reciprocity
or gratitude.

The above discussion leads us to the most damaging refutation of the personal
identity argument: Consider again premise b:

There are moral requirements of a special sort to those who contribute to

and help nurture our identities, and those whose attachment is essential for

our self-understanding. 12

An argument must be made for why the fact that others influence and contribute to one's
personal identity leads, in any logical way, to the conclusion that moral obligations are
owed to these individuals from persons thus affected by them. The closest thing to an
argument that Belliotti offers is this:

Those who subscribe to the atomistic self assume unanimously that the
volitional acts of self create moral requirements - "My expressions of free
will and choice are morally binding." But if the acts of self create moral requirements, why cannot the self itself create moral requirements by its very nature - being one kind of self rather than another; being comprised of certain "constituents" rather than others. I would argue that the acts of self both manifest who we are and help forge who we are to become; and if the acts of self can create moral requirements (as is universally accepted) then the (other) constituents of self can also.\textsuperscript{13}

Through the support of this non-atomistic view of the self, formed and shaped by others, Belliotti somehow hopes to show that it is not only one’s acts which may morally bind one, but also the parts of one’s self that owe their being to others. However he attempts to argue for this view, he is still building a moral prescription into the description of the fact of such influence without justification.

Therefore, there appears to be no rational defensive of CSP’s moral obligation to care for those who contribute to one’s personal identity.

5. Conclusion

Personal identity is not a valid argument for justifying filial obligations primarily because of the move from "is" to "ought". One way to rescue this argument, provided in the section above, is to claim that the contributions that parents make to a child’s personal identity are on balance a benefit to the child. This would supply the missing premise needed in order to argue from the fact of parental influence to the prescription of filial obligations. Belliotti actually says at one point that the obligations of personal identity obtain because of the benefit to the person and the close connection. However, he bases his whole argument on the condition of connection and not on the condition of benefit. It could be argued in fact that benefit is a necessary and sufficient condition for filial obligations. This would though change the argument from one based on personal
identity to one based on reciprocity or gratitude. We will consider both of these arguments later in this chapter.

We will turn next to an argument that has also been supported in recent philosophical discussions of filial obligations, the argument from friendship. Like personal identity, it attempts to capture the importance of the special connection between parents and children and locate duty on this nexus.

B. The Argument from Friendship

1. Definition

The argument that filial obligations are no more than the duties and responsibilities of friendship has been advanced most recently by Jane English.14 As noted in Chapter Two, Aristotle and Locke discuss friendship as an ideal feature of the parent-child relationship, but they claim it does not ground filial obligations.15 English argues that there are no means to ground filial obligations other than those of friendship. Her view is that a close bond between parent and child implies there ought to be the mutuality of help and support characteristic of friendship. A parent - adult child relationship absent this bond is one in which no obligations are incumbent upon the child toward the welfare of the parents (other than the duty to help the needy in general).

English starts with the recognition that children ought to do things for their parents and indeed often have obligations to care for their parents. She claims that the features of friendship are also those of the parent - adult child relationship; mutuality, unmeasured sacrifices and loving motivation. She further claims that friendships differ from debts in these important and relevant ways: 1) friendships do not require equal
sacrifices from the parties at all times; 2) that even equal sacrifices do not cancel the duties of the relationship; 3) that friends have duties and responsibilities to each other whether they requested or initiated the friendship; and 4) that friends are motivated to assist each other primarily and in general by affection. On her view, parental sacrifices do not make friendships, but they do create the opportunity for friendship to grow. Friendship describes the parent - adult child relationship because both (friendship and the filial relation) are characterized by mutuality and voluntary sacrifices. English maintains that grown children do not have obligations to their parents qua parents if no friendship or love relationship is present.

2. Argument

The argument from friendship is as follows:

a. Parents voluntarily sacrifice for their children.

b. Voluntary sacrifices of parents create love or friendship between parents and children.

c. When friendship between parents and children exist, the child has duties based upon the friendship to the parent.

d. When friendship or love relation does not exist, child does not owe parents anything (other than that required by the general obligations to help the needy).

3. Implications

The argument from friendship holds that filial obligations exist only to the extent that friendship exists between the parent and the child. There are, then, no particular
implications for biological or caretaking parents as such, since the obligation is not predicated upon any notion of past sacrifices or benefits. English claims that "sacrifices have an important causal role in creating an ongoing friendship", but that sacrifices are not the source of the obligation. Filial obligations based on the argument from friendship claim that no matter what benefits or past intimacy shared between parents and children, if no present friendship exists, no filial obligations are due.

a. for (exclusively) biological parents

English tests her theory and intuitions in the case of the merely biological parent:

For example, if a woman gives up her newborn child for adoption, and if no feelings of love ever develop on either side, it seems that the grown child does not have an obligation to "repay" her for her sacrifices in pregnancy. For that matter, if the adopted child has an unimpaired love relationship with the adoptive parents, he or she has the same obligations to help them as a natural child would have.

However, sacrifices preformed on account of love and caring may not create love in some circumstances (unusual, but likely), but may create appreciation and respect for the benefits bestowed. The natural child in English's example may not have obligations to "repay" the natural mother for pregnancy sacrifices, but this child could still be praised for appreciating what the mother did and hence shows that the action is open to determinations of moral praise and blame.

English could merely respond to this by saying, well of course the natural child ought to be appreciative, but this does not mean that there are any obligations due to the natural mother.

b. for (exclusively) caretaking parents

As seen in English's example above, filial obligations may obtain for the
(exclusively) caretaking parent if there is a present loving relationship. It is not precisely clear what English means by an "unimpaired love relationship," other than that a close relationship must exist at the time of consideration. Therefore, it is argued again that there is no sacrifice or benefit provided on the part of the parent that creates or grounds filial obligations.

4. Criticisms

The argument from friendship raises a number of concerns. First, when positing premise b., English argues that sacrifices can create love or friendship. She appears to jump quickly from the establishment of love, to the establishment of friendship between parent and child. Her argument is that friendship is the basis of filial obligation, but, later she says that "love ... is the correct ground of filial obligation."\textsuperscript{22}

English is conflating two different arguments here. While love is the basis of friendship, love may exist without friendship. One may love, but not like, and therefore not become "friends" with another. It is not difficult to image that one may love her parents but not like them, thus precluding friendship. We may image that even if a person is estranged from her parents and hasn’t seen them in 10 years, or that the parents and child have nothing other than the child’s early history in common, the parents and the child may still claim to love each other and believe furthermore, that some obligations exist between them. Friendship, though, implies that there is presently an ongoing relationship characterized by doing things together, communication, caring, and mutuality. But children could still love their parents even if they don’t have an ongoing personal relationship with them at present. The children would in this case hold that a
special obligation to parents exist based on the intimate love relationship between them, but it is not friendship.

There is a difference then between the argument from love and the argument from friendship. While English claims to be arguing for the latter, the former seems to better fit filial obligations and her intuitions about interpersonal relationships.

Another criticism of the argument from friendship concerns the implication that no other personal obligation is due to parents if friendship is lacking between parents and children. It was specifically the case of a parent-child relationship lacking an affective, personal relationship that was mentioned in Chapter One. Even when there is no personal relationship, our strong intuitions are that filial obligations still obtain in some measure. Callahan articulates this belief well in his criticism of the argument from friendship for filial obligations;

Whether we like it or not, we are in some sense always one with our parents, both because of the unique circumstances by which we came to know them and because of the long period of nurture when we were utterly dependent upon them. The mutual interaction of parents and children, even when friendships exist, cannot then entirely be reduced to the category of friendship. The emotional and biological bond between parent and child gives the relationship a permanent and central place in our lives, quite apart from whether that relationship turns out well or poorly. That cannot be said of friendship in the usual sense of the term.23

It is argued here then, that even if friendship duties exist between parents and adult children, there is more that is relevant to determining filial obligations than the status of the current personal relationship.

This idea that Callahan mentions, of the close and intimate connection to one’s parents, is developed by Belliotti as well. His argument is that friendship is an
inadequate or at least incomplete basis for filial obligations for it misses the fact the what exists between parents and children is not exactly analogous to friendship. Friends encounter one another as separate individuals, strangers, and form a relationship of mutuality, goodwill and respect based in affection. Children, though, never meaningfully encounter (caretaking) parents as distinct individuals due to their unique involvement in the development of the child's psychological life.

Kupfer has also argued against friendship in the parent - child relationship. He claims that the two fundamental conditions necessary for friendship are precluded from existing by the very nature of the relationship. The two conditions are independence and separateness and equality of autonomy. As we have pointed out, the adult child - parent relationship is not characterized by independence and separateness (no matter how much the child might wish it). It seems that friendship, under its usual understanding, is not possible between (caretaking) parents and adult children.

Kupfer's argument makes an additional claim with the second condition for friendship, equality of autonomy. The parties to a true friendship ought to have equal influence and power relative to each other within the relationship. Without this, the interactions within the relationship are unbalanced and serve to constrain mutual, self-disclosure. This type of give-and-take self-revelation is an important part of friendship as usually understood between peers, says Kupfer. Without it, true friendship is impossible.

Although English might try to argue that inequality of autonomy is reversed when a child becomes an adult, Kupfer and I with him, would not agree. Even in adulthood,
a child will never overcome the inequality of autonomy with parents. This is due to the unique character and history of the relationship where over the course of the relationship one person has not been "making friends" but rather guiding, instructing, and caring for the other, and the other person has been dependent on the first for learning about life and about his abilities and self-worth. Though adulthood ideally means that a child has reached independence from his parents and a relationship approximating friendship may develop, the history of the parents' relationship to the child cannot so easily be overcome.

Therefore, not only may we argue that there is more that is morally relevant to filial obligations than is understood by the argument from friendship, but we may also venture that the argument itself may be inapplicable to filial obligations.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, friendship, at the very least, can not be the only possible ground for filial obligations. It is not an adequate ground of filial obligations since not only are there morally relevant features of the filial relationship that are not captured by the friendship argument for filial obligations, but the lack of equality of autonomy and the lack of independence, make friendship between (at least caretaking) parents impossible. Additionally, other candidates such as reciprocity and gratitude have not been disproved or ruled out by this argument. We shall now turn to consider the argument from reciprocity.
C. The Argument from Reciprocity

1. Definition

Reciprocity literally means to return in degree, and often in kind, the benefit that another has bestowed. It is classically characterized by the notion of "repayment." Different definitions of reciprocity have been offered: exact repayment, repayment in degree but not in kind, reciprocity as a moral obligation, reciprocity as a social obligation, reciprocity as an ideal, reciprocity as return for harms as well as for benefits ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"), reciprocity as return for good only, reciprocity as foundational to justice, reciprocity as derived from the concept of justice. 27

The version of reciprocity that is most likely to be applicable to filial obligation may be outlined as follows: A moral obligation that requires good to be returned for the good received (not the good accepted), in degree and possibly in kind. Exact or closely proportional repayment is required. The relationship between the parties may end when the repayment is made. The motive of the donor is not relevant to whether the obligation of reciprocity exists. The donor may benefit the beneficiary either knowingly or unknowingly.

It is not necessary for this argument that we determine whether reciprocity is derived from justice or foundational to it. However, reciprocity as we understand it, is not the same as the concepts of fair play or natural duty as defined by the theories of justice of Rawls and Nozick. The principle of fairness, the basis of the duty of fair play, states that a person "is required to do her part as defined by the rules of an institution"
as long as "the institution is just (fair)" and the person "has voluntarily accepted the
benefits of the arrangement or taken advantage of the opportunities it offers to further
one's interests". The principle of fairness, and thereby the concept of fair play, does
not apply to filial obligations. There is no meaningful way to say that children have
entered voluntarily into a contractual relationship with their parents. They find
themselves in a relationship in which they are totally dependent for their survival on
others. Not only is it not voluntary, but there is no way to even claim a hypothetical or
IMPLIED CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT EXISTS. Babies and most minor children lack the rational
ability to enter such agreements, and their vulnerability would make any version of a
contract look like agreement by coercion.

Similarly, filial obligations based in reciprocity are not understood as natural
duties. Though natural duties have "no necessary connection with institutions or social
practices," they obtain between all as equal moral persons. Therefore, natural duties
do not tell us anything more about the special obligations between children and parents
AS children and parents.

2. Argument

As seen in Chapter Two, the Greeks appealed to reciprocity as justification for
filial obligations. In addition to the Greek tradition, an example of the reciprocity
argument for filial obligations is found in Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of
England:*

The duties of children to their parents arise from a principle of natural
justice and retribution. For to those who gave us existence we naturally
owe subjection and obedience during our minority, and honor and
reverence ever after; they who protected the weakness of our infancy are
entitled to our protection in the infirmity of their age; they who by sustenance and education have enabled their offspring to prosper ought in return to be supported by that offspring in case they stand in need of assistance.  

Blackstone says that justice requires reciprocity. Children ought to return to parents the benefits that the parents provided to the children when the parents become similarly in need.  

What we are interested in finding out is why we ought to hold this position.

A general argument then for reciprocity as a ground of filial obligation is the following:

a. X ought to return or repay to Y a benefit (good) received from Y.

b. Parents benefit their children by providing them with life, genetic endowments, and/or care.

c. Adult children ought to repay their parents for the benefits received.

d. Therefore, adult children have filial obligations.

3. Implications

a. for (exclusively) biological parents

Biological parents give life to their children. The question of whether life is a benefit has been dealt with earlier (II.A.2.a.). Assuming that children are benefitted by life, this view upholds filial obligations for (exclusively) biological parents. The implications for what is specifically required under this view are unclear. We raise two questions at this point: 1) is there anything that a child could do that would ever equal what his parents did for him; and 2) do we broadly (perhaps metaphorically) interpret
this benefit to oblige an adult child to "save" and sustain the life of his parents through whatever means possible to them?

The answer to the first question seems simple enough: nothing that a child could do for his parents would ever be as great a benefit to them as the benefit of life is to him. This does not, however, translate into the unlimited duties of reciprocity that seem implicit in the formulation of the second question. For example, implications for a biological parent are affected by whether the benefit of life was given knowingly or unknowingly. Since the obligation itself was not predicated upon whether the donor had knowledge of the benefit provided, presumably the obligation still holds even if the biological parent was unaware of giving life to the child. However, knowledge on the part of the donor may have implications for the degree of reciprocity required. Surely, a more extensive or perhaps more direct obligation exists when a benefit was knowingly bestowed upon another.

Other competing obligations will by necessity limit the duties of reciprocity as well as will other duties of reciprocity, such as those to caretaking parents. Additionally, no obligations of reciprocity towards biological parents may exist if parents neglected or abused the child (such as trying to kill the child after birth, abandonment or neglect). Finally, reciprocity obligations to parents may be limited on the grounds of an individual’s rights to pursue one’s own projects, of one’s own choosing. Limits of this last kind may be justified by the fact that the benefit provided was not requested. Though this does not negate the obligation, it may have significant implications for the extent of filial obligations, especially when they are in conflict with obligations to others.
and oneself, both of one’s own choosing.34

Therefore, though obligations of reciprocity may exist for non-caretaking biological parents because of the great value of the benefit of life, such obligations may be outweighed, forfeited, or in some way limited due to the particular circumstances surrounding the benefit. This means that obligations of reciprocity for the enormous benefit of having been given life are not consistently overwhelming.

The question remains, however, as to what exactly is owed to biological parents under reciprocity. If the argument is general enough (good ought to be returned for good) then a child ought to return good to his parents in any form needed, in proportion to the good he received. If the argument is more specific (such that return is not only a matter of degree but also of kind), then the content of reciprocity obligations in this case is unclear: How can one make a return in kind for receiving the benefit of life? Many possible answers present themselves: perhaps by passing on the gift of life to another; perhaps by acts which help enhance the quality of or preserve the life of the parent.

It also may be argued that in some cases (certain adoption situations for example), biological parents indirectly provide caretaking for their child by securing care taking for the child superior to that which the parents themselves could provide. Duties of reciprocity for caretaking might then apply to these biological parents, though such duties would be as equally indirect as the provision of the caretaking itself. Nevertheless, in this situation obligations of reciprocity in kind, as well as degree, would be more clearly understood as indirect provision of some types of care for the biological parent (e.g.,
providing, in case of need, money for visiting nurse services or groceries, to pay the rent, etc.).

b. for (exclusively) caretaking parents

The argument from reciprocity stipulates children would only be required to provide benefits to their parents to the extent that the children received such care and assistance from their parents. This would mean that parents who met the minimal requirements for child caretaking would not be entitled to filial obligations as extensive as to those parents who went "above and beyond the call of duty." Consequently, it would also mean that negligent or abusive parents might not be entitled to any services from their children (like the Greeks). (Of course, this does not mean that the child is forbidden to help parents. It only means that they are not morally required to do so.)

The extent of filial obligations towards those caretaking parents who provide everything they can for their children, is bounded in some versions of reciprocity. Lawrence Becker supplies two "cautions" concerning extensive parental caretaking and its implications for reciprocity-based filial obligations. The first is what he calls the saturation point. This is the point beyond which more of the good things a child receives from a parent is not necessarily good for the child, e.g., a smothering parent. Becker claims, "Children have obligations for good received, not for things that go beyond the saturation point." The second caution involves the principle of marginal utility, where an additional good may be valuable and valued, but not as much as a similar good already received, e.g., a second coat. Marginal utility helps to understand why the requirement of proportionality does not necessarily require overwhelmingly extensive
filial obligations for children of such parents.

4. Criticisms

Let us consider four different arguments against reciprocity. The first we will call the Scorekeeper’s Criticism. According to the argument from reciprocity, in order to fulfill one’s filial obligations a child must be vigilant both of the benefits provided by her parents and of the extent to which she is acting to repay the benefits. Even if exact repayment is not required but rather a proportionate and fitting return, in a sense, she must still "keep score." If there are no positive feelings for parents, then this method at least clarifies what the children ought to do. However, such attention to "doing one’s duty," to matching the benefits, may be dangerous for the quality and closeness of the affective and personal relationship between parent and child. As stated in Chapter One and in the introduction to this chapter, filial obligations should not be grounded by anything which might undermine or damage the quality of the interpersonal relationship between parent and child. Indeed, the Scorekeeper’s Criticism would hold that the notion of "debt" to be repaid is repugnant to both parent and child and it may lead to negative feelings. Therefore, reciprocity does not appear to be the best understanding for the foundation of filial obligations.

Initially, this argument looks persuasive. Surely, we do not think that the process of quantifying all the positive and negative benefits received from parents and then attempting to figure out how to pay them back proportionately is healthy for the affective relationship between parents and children. If there are positive feelings or ambivalence, then such a procedure surely does not nurture them. The claim of the Scorekeeper’s
Criticism, nevertheless, is not necessarily true. It is a contingent fact that "keeping score" may adversely affect filial feeling. That my obligation is grounded in reciprocity and requires me to repay proportionately does not necessarily mean that I have to engage in the psychological process of keeping accounts of benefits and repayments. We can imagine, for example, that the best way to keep score is precisely to act on our feelings of affection for parents, knowing that in this way we must be at least fulfilling our obligation to "keep score." 40

This problem for reciprocity has also been addressed by Becker. He claims that for this reason, "[r]eciprocity should be made a matter of retrospective obligation." 41

...the arguments here do not say that we should be disposed to think of it [reciprocity] as an obligation while we do it. They assert only that we should be disposed always to treat it as an obligation in retrospect, and only occasionally as an obligation in prospect. In intimate relationships it may well be that we should ordinarily reciprocate out of other motives (e.g., out of love rather than duty). The 'expectation' of reciprocity would arise (psychologically), then, only when something goes wrong. 42

The Scorekeeper's Criticism is effectively deflated by the process of making reciprocity a matter of retrospective obligation in general. More literal "keeping score" is precisely indicated in cases where other motives, such as filial feelings, do not exist for the adult child.

The second criticism of reciprocity-based filial obligations has been leveled by Jane English. 43 We will call her argument the Unrequested Voluntary Sacrifices Criticism. This criticism holds that reciprocity is not the basis of filial obligations because obligations of reciprocity are only incurred if they are requested of the donor by the recipient. English begins her argument by distinguishing between "favors" and
"voluntary sacrifices." A favor is a benefit provided by one person to another, at the request of the person receiving the benefit. English says that "when A, at B’s request, bears some burden for B, then B incurs an obligation to reciprocate." On English’s account request (by the recipient) and acceptance (by the donor) is a necessary feature for reciprocity.

A voluntary sacrifice is defined by English as a benefit provided to another undertaken without a request from the recipient. In this case, there is no duty to reciprocate making it an act of supererogation to do something for the person in return. The example that English uses is a person who goes away on vacation and returns to find that his neighbor has mowed his grass twice weekly in his absence. This is an act which is a voluntary sacrifice, rather than a favor because (we must infer) the act was not requested. English says it is hard to distinguish favors (can be from total strangers) and non-favors, but she claims one can surmise which of these two characterize the action by determining how people are motivated: If it is to be kind or nice (non-favor) or because that person did x for me (favor).

Let us now present her argument against reciprocity as the basis of filial obligations:

1. Repayment is not required for a voluntary sacrifice.
2. Parents do things for their children without request from their children and moreover, parents do these things voluntarily and often at great personal sacrifice.
3. This characterizes parental action as voluntary sacrifice, rather than
as a favor, which must be requested by the beneficiary.

4. Therefore children do not have obligations of reciprocity to their parents.

English’s argument that request is essential for reciprocity renders it nonapplicable to filial obligations (since, of course, children did not ask their parents to be born, to have sacrifices made for them, etc.). She does not successfully defend her version of reciprocity as compared to other versions, but merely offers the distinction between favor and voluntary sacrifice as all that is necessary to understand reciprocity on any view. The version of reciprocity given above, though, does not make request a necessary feature of reciprocity. We must challenge Premise 3 of the reconstructed English argument: "Repayment is not required for a voluntary sacrifice."

Our response claims that one cannot infer that she has no obligation of reciprocity from the fact of non-request. Let us suppose that indeed favors must be requested. It is still questionable whether all voluntary sacrifices do not require reciprocity. Suppose that A parks his car and puts money in the parking meter for the time that he anticipates being gone. A encounters unforeseen circumstances that cause him to be late returning to his car and the time on the meter expires. After the expiration, B happens to be walking down the street and sees an officer writing parking tickets. She sees A’s car is next to be ticketed. B puts money in the meter for A’s car and thus spares A the ticket. A happens to be coming up the street just in time to see B finish putting the money in the meter and walk away. Surely, we want to claim here that though B’s voluntary sacrifice was unrequested, A owes B repayment of the money she put in his meter.
This is just one counter-example to English’s claim. Bellotti argues, not against the distinction between favor and voluntary sacrifice in general, but rather that the example of the neighbor who repairs your roof voluntarily, or mows your lawn, is not relevant to the parent-child relationship for at least three reasons: 1) children cannot care for themselves anyway, like the adult who could have their own roof reshingled if they wanted (children lack autonomy); 2) parents have a legal responsibility to care for their children and a neighbor has no legal or moral responsibility to help in a non-emergency situation; and 3), most importantly, I can choose to request my neighbor’s help or not, but children are "not capable of requesting or refraining from requesting many of the sacrifices their parents make."  

Hence, we may legitimately infer many things from my not requesting anything from my neighbor, while we can make no inferences regarding the absence of a request by a child to her parents. The child’s subsequent whine that she "never asked to be born" or "never asked" her parents to care for her is both ludicrous and incoherent.

Both my example and Bellotti’s argument against English’s analogy show that English’s argument against reciprocity fails because request is not a necessary condition for having the obligation. Therefore, English’s argument against reciprocity as the basis of filial obligation is not persuasive.

There is, though, another criticism that English could have been making here. She claimed, as quoted above, that a method to distinguish between a favor and a "non-favor" is to determine how a person is motivated: If it is to be kind or nice (non-favor) or because that person did x for me (favor). It is not surprising that English would use motivation as a test for voluntary sacrifice since she is assuming that all favors are
a discharge of a debt voluntarily undertaken and that when someone sacrifices for another without a request from the recipient, it is because the donor has the best interests of the recipient in mind. What is being tracked here is the thought that obligations of reciprocity obtain when a person (legitimately) expects a return and conversely, such obligations do not hold when a person neither expects nor desires a return. What makes reciprocity seem inappropriate for filial obligations is that we find that parents (for the most part) do not give benefits to their children with the expectation of repayment. Indeed, they are often insulted by such thoughts...

However, reciprocity as we discussed it above, is not sensitive to any type of motivation. Whether someone expects a return, does not expect a return, provides the benefit knowingly or unknowingly, or provides the benefit in order to secure a relationship, to cement a friendship, to benefit a person, or to make the other indebted, does not matter to the existence of the obligation of reciprocity (though some of the above will have an effect on the degree and amount of return required). Therefore the criticism is not that reciprocity does not work because parents do not expect nor want a return and that reciprocity does not apply in these cases, but rather that reciprocity is not at all dependant upon the motivation of the parents when they were providing the benefits and it seems to us that it should.

The third criticism of reciprocity is the Relationship Criticism. One of the features of reciprocity-based obligations, as we have noted, is that once the obligation is met, the relationship of obligor to obligee is terminated and the status of the original, pre-obligation relationship is restored. Like the argument from friendship, the argument
from reciprocity holds that filial obligations are fulfilled or terminated when the morally significant relationship between parents and children is terminated. What, though, is the status of the parent-adult child relationship before the obligation of reciprocity exists? Leaving aside the aforementioned vexing issue of what would count as repayment for biological parents, this question is meaningless since the child and hence the possibility of any relationship did not exist prior to the obligation. For purely caretaking parents the status of the original relationship was that of strangers. Can we meaningfully say that after obligations of reciprocity have been met, children owe parents no more than what strangers owe one another, i.e., the general duty to help the needy if there is no great risk to oneself?

We may take a similar line of argument here as that taken in the criticism of the argument from friendship: While there may be obligations of friendship and/or reciprocity to parents, neither can solely be the basis of filial obligations because the lack of such obligations does not mean that no other morally important relationship (which could generate such obligations) exists. To paraphrase and usurp Callahan's argument against friendship: The emotional and biological bond between parent and child gives the relationship a permanent and central place in our lives, quite apart from whether a child has succeeded in paying back or returning benefits to his parents. It seems absurdly contrived in this circumstance to claim that parents and children could ever again be moral strangers.

The fourth criticism of reciprocity we will call the Duty-Meeting Criticism. This argument begins with the question of whether reciprocity is due to those who benefit
another when it is their duty or obligation to do so. Consider those whose obligation it is to provide benefits to another, a sales clerk, a waiter, a mailperson, or a teacher. Ought we to repay these people in kind for the benefits they provide? The answer seems to be no. They are merely "doing their job." However, some might argue that because these obligations were voluntarily assumed and these people are being repaid for their services, even if not directly by us, the obligation pertains and is met. But this point would not affect the reciprocity argument provided above. In the argument from reciprocity the only condition for the existence of the obligation was that Y provided a benefit to X and that X ought to repay Y for the good received. Do we owe obligation to the emergency room doctor who saves our lives? No, he is doing his job. He had no choice to be there to help us that particular night. But reciprocity says we should repay him. But we do not repay him, even when we pay the hospital, we are not paying doctor back directly. He will get paid whether we come to the emergency room or not. By this reasoning we do not owe obligations of reciprocity to parents when it was their job to take care of us. The argument given above did not make this clear. Even if it's true here, then reciprocity does not work. We do seem to owe the doctor something, but not reciprocity.

To summarize our discussion, the Scorekeeper's Criticism is not persuasive since it is possible to show how meeting the duty of reciprocity does not have to endanger the desirable affective relationship between adult children and parents. The Unrequested Voluntary Sacrifices Criticism supported by English also does not demonstrate the inapplicability of reciprocity to filial obligations. However, the amended Unrequested
Voluntary Sacrifices Criticism, along with the Relationship Criticism and the Duty-Meeting Criticism, jointly reveal that reciprocity cannot be all there is to filial obligations. These criticisms do not prove conclusively that reciprocity is not a justification for filial obligations, but they show at the very least that reciprocity cannot function as the exclusive foundation for filial obligations.

5. Conclusion

The argument from reciprocity, like the argument from friendship, does not appear from our discussions to be the sole basis of filial obligations. The version of the argument that we have put forth is the only plausible version that might be applicable to filial obligations. The criticisms show that there are features which are viewed as morally relevant to the nature of the parent-child relationship and obligations that are not fully or satisfactorily captured by the reciprocity argument as it is presented here.

We turn, now to our fourth and final nominee for the basis of filial obligations - the argument from gratitude.

III. The Argument from Gratitude

A. Definition

Gratitude, like reciprocity, is a response to having been benefitted by another. The table below shows how gratitude differs from reciprocity and it summarizes the crucial features necessary for both the existence and the fulfillment of the gratitude obligation.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Return or repay benefits received.</td>
<td>Not repayment; may include compensation to donor for benefit or loss incurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive of donor not relevant to existence of obligation; may influence degree of return.</td>
<td>Motive of donor decisive to existence of obligation: voluntary, intentional, benevolent and noncoercive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return in degree and (possibly) in kind of the benefit received.</td>
<td>Response ought to be relative to degree of value of benefit as perceived by donor and as determined by motive of donor. When present, the greater the degree of sacrifice by donor, the greater the gratitude obligation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between the parties may end when obligation fulfilled.</td>
<td>Relationship between the parties is furthered by fulfillment of obligation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of recipient is not relevant for the existence or fulfillment of the obligation.</td>
<td>Attitude of recipient is not relevant for existence of obligation; attitude is relevant for fulfillment of obligation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to understand what is meant by gratitude, it will be helpful to discuss each feature in depth.

The first feature listed for gratitude states that gratitude is not strictly a repayment for the benefit received. It is an acknowledgement of the receipt of a benefit, freely given. Just what this acknowledgement is will be discussed below, along with the importance of the phrase "freely given." However, the difficulty with this first feature of gratitude is that we often speak of having a "debt of gratitude," as if it is something that must be repaid to a creditor.\(^52\) The use of the word "debt" is unfortunate here for this reason. It might of course be less confusing to say "I owe you my gratitude" or "I have an obligation of gratitude toward you," but these are not as commonly used.
Perhaps it is because there is some element of compensation to gratitude at most times that the word "debt" is used. Often, when someone does something for us at great personal risk or incurs an unexpected expense or difficulty, even though it was freely done, we believe that we ought to compensate him for his trouble or his loss. It would, however, be considered ungrateful in such cases, and all others fitting the criteria above, to attempt to completely repay the donor. This would mean either that one did not recognize the motive of the donor or that his good will is rejected. Berger puts it thus:

"First, while some form of reciprocation is requisite, this need not be, and often ought not to be, the giving of the same or an equivalent benefit to the grantor. Not only is this not always possible, but sometimes it would destroy the force of the original gift. When someone grants us a benefit because of his concern for us, or because he wishes to make us happy, it can be an insult to return it or to show that we feel obligated to make a like return."

Regardless, in most cases where one has the obligation of gratitude, the concept of making an equal return or repayment for a benefit seems stretched. Simmons, taking after Sidgwick's discussion on the matter, shows through example how unlikely such a concept would appear:

"No one would maintain that the difference between what I owe a man who saves my life and what I owe a man who saves, say, my house is equivalent to the difference in value to me of my life and my house. And clearly, in neither case do I owe the man an amount equivalent to, say, the cash value I would place on my life or my house; so the suggestion of equal return being required seems implausible as well.

Kant, argued that one could never completely repay a donor, or achieve an equal footing with him, because the donor would always have the advantage of having been the first to show benevolence."
We summarize, then, that while the obligation of gratitude may sometimes include compensation to the donor for benefits received and also, as stated above, for losses or injuries incurred as a result of her attempt to provide a benefit, it is not strictly a repayment or return for benefits received.

The second feature of gratitude is the relevance of the motive of the donor. Unlike reciprocity, where the motive of the donor is irrelevant to whether or not one has obligations to repay one's benefactor, gratitude holds that the motive of the donor is crucial to the existence of the gratitude obligation. There are four important, interrelated aspects to this feature: the donor must provide the benefit voluntarily, intentionally, benevolently, and must not force the recipient to accept the benefit.

The actions of the donor must be voluntary in the sense that the donor ought not to be coerced or be in any way not free to either provide a benefit or to not provide a benefit. Fred Berger, in his work on gratitude, explains the point in the following way:

Suppose someone does something involving a sacrifice on his part which benefits us, but he was forced by threats to do it. In such a case, gratitude is not due; the appropriate response may be to return the gift, if possible, or to make sufficient restitution or replacement of it. The voluntariness with which the benefits are produced for us is thus a factor in determining if gratitude is appropriate when others benefit us.²⁷

Does having the obligation to provide a benefit count as not being free? No, because one is free not to fulfill one's obligation. The question of whether gratitude is owed for a benefit provided by one fulfilling her obligation is important, however, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

The donor must act for the purpose of providing a benefit to the recipient. This has to be the primary motive for action, although other reasons may be present as well.
A donor may expect a response to his benefit, but he cannot demand it. The obligation of gratitude is reduced if a donor performs acts in expectation of a grateful response, or because of any other ulterior motives. Therefore, while the donor's action must be voluntary and intentional, it must also be part of his intention to do something to help the recipient. As Berger states, "Gratitude, then, does not consist in the requital of benefits [reciprocity] but in a response to benevolence; it is a response to a grant of benefits (or the attempts to benefit us) which was motivated by a desire to help us." Hobbes also saw gratitude as dependent upon a benefit received due to the "good will" of another. Kant says the benefactor is "in a relation of love toward the recipient." and that even "mere heartfelt benevolence on another's part, without physical results, deserves to be called a duty of virtue. So motive matters so much, that even if someone did not do anything for another, but wished her well, she ought to have gratitude.

The benevolence intrinsic to the donor's motive must not however, lead to unjustifiable paternalism. It is more important for gratitude that the donor not force (unjustifiably) the benefit on the recipient against her will, than that the benefit be provided. Thus Simmons states:

By using force, he [the donor] violated my right to freedom of action, and the mere fact that I would benefit from this violation is not sufficient to justify it. So while I may be glad that my benefactor violated my rights, if he is not justified in doing so he will be owed nothing by me. He merits no reward for morally prohibited behavior.

Just how we define "unjustifiable" is of course crucial to such a discussion, for there may be cases in which the use of force may still generate obligations of gratitude. Such cases might include, as Simmons says, ones "in which the coerced individual benefits by being
prevented from harming himself when he is not fully rational or in control."\textsuperscript{63}

Therefore, the obligation of gratitude is due when the benefit provided by the donor is intentionally and voluntarily, but non-coercively, given to help the recipient for her own sake.

The third feature listed on the table concerns how the degree of the obligation of gratitude is to be determined. The relevant information for this measurement are the motive of the donor and the donor’s perceived value of the benefit for the recipient. The degree of our obligation of gratitude is directly proportional to the selflessness with which the donor gave the benefit and to the (correctly) perceived magnitude of the benefit.\textsuperscript{64} In other words, the greater the benevolence of the donor, the greater the extent of gratitude and the greater the value of the benefit, the greater the extent of the gratitude obligation.

The sacrifice made by the donor, however, will affect the magnitude of the obligation of gratitude. By the nature of the act of voluntarily, intentionally and benevolently aiding someone, we can assume that there will be some special effort made by the donor on behalf of the recipient. Some authors mention the relevance of this factor when they say the benefit is provided "at some cost to that agent"\textsuperscript{65} or that "the degree of sacrifice or concession made by the grantor"\textsuperscript{66} matters for what is required for meeting gratitude. Others, such as Simmons, argue for the stronger claims that sacrifice is a necessary condition for the existence of the obligation of gratitude and that the extent of the gratitude obligation is also directly proportional with the amount of sacrifice on the part of the donor. Specifically, Simmons argues thus:
It seems quite clear that where an obligation of gratitude is owed to the benefactor, he [the donor] must have made some special effort or sacrifice, or incurred some loss, in providing the benefit in question. If a person benefits us by merely pursuing his own business, we do not feel any special debt is owed him. If, for instance, I am being mugged in an alley when a man’s walking past frightens my assailant away, I will not owe that man any special debt of gratitude. His appearance was only a happy coincidence, which cost him nothing….I may also be grateful that my cab’s being late forced me to miss my plane, a plane which subsequently crashed. But certainly I have no obligation to either the cab or to its driver.67

Simmons is attempting to argue that the reason gratitude is not owed in these examples, not even for a benefit which saves a life, is that there is no sacrifice on the part of the donor. However, that is not why gratitude is not called for in his examples. The cost of the action had nothing to do with the lack of gratitude. The cases Simmons uses would not call for gratitude because the donor in each did not voluntarily, intentionally, and benevolently provide the benefit in each case. The emphasis is not on "cost him nothing", but rather on "a happy coincidence", which is not an occasion of gratitude.

The second problem with Simmons’s condition of sacrifice is that he, like Lombardi,68 conflates making "a special effort" with the notion of "sacrifice." The former, which we have already claimed is inherent in fulfilling the conditions of voluntariness, intentionality, and benevolence, does not necessarily imply the latter. We can imagine any one of a number of cases in which someone makes a special effort on behalf of another, without "sacrificing." One could, of course, argue that someone always loses time, when making a special effort for another and this is a type of sacrifice. It would seem that the relevant criterion here is what counts as a sacrifice. Is it any loss incurred by the donor in her effort to provide a benefit to the recipient?
Simmons would have to say no, since this is tautological; we know that doing any one thing precludes doing other things that a person might also like to do at any given moment in time. Surely Simmons does not mean this since "sacrifice" would then always be present in any provision of a benefit and hence his criterion would be superfluous. However, if his point is that gratitude is only due when a person has been (greatly) affected (and how would this be determined or measured?) in a negative manner, he would claim that gratitude may not be due in cases when this feature was not present. Let us consider the case of taking dinner to a sick person. This might entail a great deal of sacrifice of time, money and inconvenience or it may not inconvenience one other than the loss of a short period of time, which is viewed by the donor as the best way to spend that moment in time. According to Simmons, gratitude is not owed in the second case. This is counter-intuitive and does not seem right.

Still, what does seem right is that sacrifice plays a special role, when it is present, in determining the magnitude of the obligation of gratitude. Surely we do want to say in a given instance that the obligation of gratitude is strengthened or increased if the donor also made a sacrifice to provide the benefit to the recipient. Even Kant says that:

To help a man in distress is charity; to help him in less urgent needs is benevolence; to help him in the amenities of life is courtesy. We may be the recipients of a charity which has not cost the giver much and our gratitude is commensurate with the degree of good-will which moved him to the action. We are grateful not only for what we have received but also for the good intention which prompted it, and the greater the effort it has cost our benefactor, the greater our gratitude.^[69]

Therefore we might say that while the presence of a sacrifice on the part of the donor is not necessary to the existence of an obligation of gratitude, its presence added to a pre-
existing obligation, does increase the extent of the response required by the obligation.

We can imagine at this point, many different permutations among these three factors. We can clarify the relationships between these variables by the following heuristic approach:

**Extent of the Obligation of Gratitude**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Sacrifice</th>
<th>Degree of Benevolence of the Motive of the Donor</th>
<th>H value</th>
<th>I benefit</th>
<th>G H</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Though we must be cautious of oversimplification, this chart illustrates the relationship among benevolence/motive, value of the benefit and sacrifice. The relative rankings of these constituents of gratitude proceed in the following order, from the relatively most extensive obligations to the relatively least extensive obligations: 8 is the most extensive, followed in descending order by 7, 6, and 5. The following pairs may be equally extensive and are in descending order following the group above, 4-16, 3-15, 2-14, 1-13. 9, 10, 11 an 12 are equally less extensive relative to the others. This feature of gratitude then tells us that the extent of the obligation of gratitude is determined by the motive of the donor and the perceived value of the benefit, with the presence of a
sacrifice on the part of the donor increasing the extent of the obligatory response.

The fourth feature listed refers to the effect that meeting obligations of gratitude has upon the relationship between donor and recipient. Even after immediate obligations of gratitude are met, the relationship does not appear to be severed. One reason proposed for this, is made by Kant. He claimed that the obligation of gratitude was never over, thus sustaining the relationship between donor and recipient.

For a moral object is sacred if the obligation with regard to it cannot be discharged completely by any act in keeping with it (so that one who is under obligation always remains under obligation)....one cannot, by any repayment of a kindness received, rid oneself of the obligation for it, since the recipient can never win away from the benefactor his priority of merit, namely having been the first in benevolence. Kant claims that the obligation lingers because one will always have cause to be grateful to another for his spontaneous benevolence. Others, like Berger, have argued that the reason the relationship between donor and recipient endures is that a sincere gratitude response establishes "a relationship of moral community...maintained, or recognized, consisting of mutual respect and regard." Conversely, not meeting the obligations of gratitude lead away from such a community or relationship. It may terminate or prevent a relationship from being formed. This appears to be the reverse of what happens with obligations of strict reciprocity. When the obligation of reciprocity is not met, the parties remain in the relationship of debtor to creditor. It is only when the obligation is discharged, when the debt is paid, that the relationship is completed and finished.

This difference between reciprocity and gratitude also highlights another way in which the relationship between the donor and the recipient is furthered. Gratitude, unlike reciprocity, is not a strict repayment for benefits received. Camenisch states:
The gift relation can endure in part because of the imprecision of the recipient's indebtedness. Not knowing precisely what is owed, one tends to return more than enough, thus redressing one imbalance by establishing another which the former donor must then redress. Whether or not participants are fully conscious of such dynamics, they nevertheless assure a continuing relation between the parties rather than a momentary or episodic one based on more precise contractual relations.  

Therefore at the least we may state that obligations of gratitude appear to create, enhance and reinforce the relationship between the donor and the recipient.

The fifth feature of gratitude concerns the importance of the attitudes of the recipient, both for establishing the conditions necessary for the existence of an obligation of gratitude, and also for the conditions necessary for determining the fulfillment of an obligation of gratitude. Some have argued that by accepting the benefit given, the recipient shows he wants the benefit and assumes the obligation of gratitude. However, as we have discussed before, there are situations to which the question of acceptance does not meaningfully apply, even assuming a basis of implied, implicit or tacit consent. One such situation is the case in which the donor benefits the recipient without the recipient's prior knowledge. Simmons claims that a necessary condition for the obligation of gratitude is that it must be the case that the recipient would want the benefit (if certain impairing conditions present were corrected). This does not, however, seem to be a necessary condition of gratitude at all. Surely we can imagine a case in which a donor provides a benefit, either not known of by the recipient or even one that the recipient did not want, and yet because the donor perceived that the benefit was valuable and she intentionally wanted to help the recipient, we think there is some obligation of gratitude.
Simmons also contends that another necessary condition for possessing an obligation of gratitude is that the recipient would not want the benefit not to be provided by the donor (given that certain impairing conditions were corrected). He argues, "Thus, while I may want my lawn to be mowed while I’m out of town, I may not want my neighbor to do it; I may prefer not to be indebted to him, for a variety of reasons...So the condition that I want the benefit with which I am provided must be supplemented with [this condition]." This also does not seem to hold. While I may prefer not to be indebted to a particular person, the fact that the situation meets all the other criteria makes it hard to see how Simmons could argue that gratitude is not due. (Which is what he is doing when he says the condition is necessary). Suppose, for example, that instead of mowing the lawn, we consider the case of drowning or being in a burning house, where we are rescued or saved by someone we don’t like. This fact does not relevantly alter the situation. We still owe gratitude even though we didn’t want him to benefit us. Simmons’s condition might work if it were the case that in a given situation a number of people could help, and the person who the recipient did not want to help knew this. But here it would rather be a case where we would consider the benefit being provided by the unwanted person as being forced. This is a condition already accounted for in the discussion of the second feature.

There are, then, no attitudes of the recipient necessary for establishing the existence of the gratitude obligation. We turn now to the discussion of the relevance of the recipient’s attitudes for the fulfillment of an obligation of gratitude.

While most authors seem to acknowledge that recipients of a benefit often feel
gratitude and that people usually expect others to have these feelings and other attendant attitudes, there are traditionally two different views concerning the role of the recipient's attitude for the obligation of gratitude. There are those who claim that feelings or attitudes are important for the gratitude response but hold that gratitude is not strictly a moral obligation. Camenisch, for example, holds that gratitude includes expected and appropriate, but not in fullest sense obligatory, attitudinal response of the recipient to the gift. He discusses a spectrum notion of moral dimension on which gift and gratitude are located between nonmoral and strictly moral. Gift is located between windfall and contract and gratitude between whimsy and obligation.\textsuperscript{78} Berger too discusses the important aspects of the "internal" features of gratitude. He claims feelings and attitudes are important for morality and moral virtues involve acting in certain ways and having appropriate attitudes and feelings toward others. Feeling gratitude is important for moral assessment of character, but he claims, feelings cannot be required.

Conversely, there are those who claim that gratitude is a moral obligation, although feelings are not part of such an obligation. Ross lists gratitude as one of the seven prima facie duties, but he uses it to mean returning of services done by others to an individual, regardless of recipient affect.\textsuperscript{79} Card\textsuperscript{80} and Simmons both think that gratitude is a moral obligation but that feelings are not required. Simmons summaries that there "is widespread uncertainty about the existence of 'debts' or 'obligations' of gratitude, when compared with, say, obligations to keep promises. Second, it is very difficult to see whether considerations of gratitude fall properly within the realm of morality at all."\textsuperscript{81} He makes the distinction - attributed to Lyons, between, norms of
etiquette and morality. Simmons also rightly notes that prior to the twentieth century, philosophers such as Hobbes and Kant were treating gratitude as a serious moral obligation.82

The commonality for both of these views is the acceptance of the argument that feelings can not be required since they are not wholly subject to rational control. This means either that a definition of gratitude includes feelings, but then has difficulty saying that morality demands certain feelings, or that the definition says gratitude is a moral obligation but feelings are not part of the duty-meting character of the obligation.

There is, however, a third view challenging the underlying assumption that feelings are not subject to rational control. It contends that there is a moral obligation to cultivate feelings of gratitude. Most recently, this argument has been espoused by Weiss.83 Weiss observes that we have been taught to believe that we are helpless where our feelings are concerned; that the heart wants what the heart wants. This is not what everyone believes though. She calls our attention to the mental health professionals who not only teach individuals to control their feelings, but how to change their feelings when given circumstances arise. Weiss claims, "I believe, with Kant, that human beings ought to feel certain ways and, with Sidgwick, that it is not impossible for them to get themselves to do so."84 Her thesis is that "the duty of gratitude is the duty to 'cultivate' the grateful attitude under appropriate circumstances."85 Let us explore why she believes this view may be rationally defended.

First, Kant does claim that the good will of a donor ought to be appreciated. "But even mere heartfelt benevolence, apart from any such act (of beneficence), is
already a basis of obligation to gratitude. A grateful disposition of this kind is called appreciatives. Kant also distinguishes between active and affective gratitude, claiming that "mere heartfelt benevolence on another's part, without physical results, deserves to be called a duty of virtue." Kant says gratitude may be from duty or from inclination. One's attitude towards being under the obligation of gratitude was certainly subject as well to moral judgment for Kant:

It (obligation of gratitude) involves not regarding a kindness received as a burden one would gladly be rid of (since the one so favored stands a step lower than his benefactor, and this wounds his pride), but taking even the occasion for gratitude as a moral kindness, that is, as an opportunity given one to unite the virtue of gratitude with love of man, to combine the cordiality of a benevolent disposition with sensitivity to benevolence... and so to cultivate one's love of man.

Weiss also appeals to Sidgwick's arguments concerning the feelings of gratitude. She rightly claims that he feels uneasy about the requirement of feelings, but yet he believes that it is possible to subject feelings to cultivation. He claimed that the donor ought to cultivate feelings of affection for the recipient. Weiss uses Sidgwick's argument to make her own; feelings of gratitude may be required. It is interesting to note that Simmons seemingly interprets Sidgwick as claiming the opposite of what Weiss claims:

When I am under an obligation of gratitude, then, am I bound to feel something, to complete some outward performance, or both? Sidgwick, in the passage cited above, equates the duty of gratitude with that of "requiting benefits," and seems to go on to allow that a mere outward performance is all that is required by the duty.

Let us look at length, then, at Sidgwick's view, to see whether Weiss or Simmons has the more accurate interpretation:

And I agree that it cannot be a strict duty to feel an emotion, so far as it is not directly within the power of the Will to produce it at any given
time. Still (as I have said) it seems to me that this emotional element is
included in our common notion of Charity or Philanthropy, regarded as
a Virtue: and I think it paradoxical to deny that it raises the mere
beneficent disposition of the will to a higher degree of excellence, and
renders its effects better. If this be so, it will be a duty to cultivate the
affection so far as it is possible to do so: and indeed this would seem (no
less than the permanent disposition to do good) to be a normal effect of
repeated beneficent resolves and actions: since, as has often been
observed, a benefit tends to excite love in the agent towards the recipient
of the benefit, no less than in the recipient towards the agent. It must be
admitted, however, that this effect is less certain than the production of
the benevolent disposition; and that some men are naturally so unattractive
to others that the latter can feel no affection, though they may entertain
benevolent dispositions, towards the former. At any rate, it would seem
to be a duty generally, and till we find the effort fruitless, to cultivate
kind affections towards those whom we ought to benefit; not only by
doing kind actions, but by placing ourselves under any natural influences
which experience shows to have a tendency to produce affection.91

Sidgwick says further that it is difficult to determine whether affections we have
for relations and friends are "to be considered as moral excellences and cultivated as
such."92 Sidgwick says we are "touched" and "charmed" by outpouring of friendship,
gratitude and domestic relations, but that "what chiefly concerns us as moralists, under
the present head, is the ascertainment of the right rules of distribution of services and
kind acts, in so far as we consider the rendering of these to be morally obligatory."93

Both Simmons and Weiss seem to be faithful to Sidgwick, but in different ways.
Simmons tracks Sidgwick's more literally on the specific topic of gratitude, whereas
Weiss uses his views concerning the possibility of requiring feelings, to bolster her
argument for requiring feelings of gratitude for a recipient of a benefit in certain
circumstances. What is important for this analysis is that Weiss's view of the duty to
cultivate feelings of gratitude may be supported by both the work of Kant and Sidgwick.

Weiss's final point concerning the basis for the duty to cultivate feelings of
gratitude is culled from the traditional views of gratitude that hold the obligation of gratitude as acts which demonstrate gratitude. She states:

Indeed, even for those for whom the grateful return or demonstration is central, the duty to feel grateful is not entirely absent. For the moment that they require the sincerity of the return or demonstration, they require a grateful feeling or attitude on the part of the person who makes the return or demonstration. Thus, those who value not the physical movements of lips and limbs as such, but rather the sincerity with which one makes such movements, clearly place feelings or attitudes within the scope of what can be morally required of humans.\textsuperscript{94}

Weiss proceeds to enumerate the conditions under which she claims we have a duty to cultivate feelings of gratitude. These conditions are relevantly similar to the one's listed in the chart under gratitude and discussed earlier in this section. Weiss's conditions also exclude considerations of whether the recipient wanted the benefit and the recipient's attitude concerning the donor. She claims that the moral obligation of gratitude is,

not B's obligation to repay or thank A for something A does that B really wants and is glad A does; [Simmons' view] it is the obligation - sometimes quite difficult - to feel grateful both under these circumstances and when B would have preferred that A not help him, or when B does not like A, or when A perceives what he does as a benefit to B though B does not [when it is not the case that it is none of A's business to do x]. To fulfill an obligation of gratitude, B must appreciate A and x because of A's motivation and because of A's perception of x rather than because of B's.\textsuperscript{95}

An obligation of gratitude according to this argument is cultivating a feeling of appreciation to one's benefactor (a) for the benefit itself and (b) for being the source of the benefit.

Such is Weiss's argument for the obligation of gratitude as the obligation to cultivate feelings of gratitude. It is an argument that appeals to the necessary condition
of the affective component for the establishment of gratitude - "gratitude, stripped of grateful feeling, ceases to be gratitude."96 - and to the substantial part that the affective component of gratitude seems to occupy for those such as Kant and Sidgwick.

However, there is a crucial difference between what Weiss is calling the duty to cultivate feelings and the views of Kant and Sidgwick. She is appealing to a view of atomistic "feelings" of gratitude which are not conceptually the same as that to which Kant and Sidgwick refer. As we can see in the passages quoted above, Kant discusses grateful "dispositions" and the "virtue of gratitude," which he implies includes "a benevolent disposition." By this, he does not mean merely grateful and benevolent feelings, but rather attitudes one has about one's feelings - a kind of second order feelings. Dispositions in this sense, possess a cognitive element in addition to the affective one. They are, in effect, attitudes of our will. These attitudes or dispositions include feelings but also make possible judgment with regard to a set of possible actions.

Sidgwick also holds such a view. It is worth repeating the Sidgwick passage in reference to this new point:

And I agree that it cannot be a strict duty to feel an emotion, so far as it is not directly within the power of the Will to produce it at any given time. Still (as I have said) it seems to me that this emotional element is included in our common notion of Charity or Philanthropy, regarded as a Virtue: and I think it paradoaxical to deny that it raises the mere beneficient disposition of the will to a higher degree of excellence, and renders its effects better. If this be so, it will be a duty to cultivate the affection so far as it is possible to do so; and indeed this would seem (no less than the permanent disposition to do good) to be a normal effect of repeated beneficient resolves and actions.97

Feelings for Sidgwick are also an element of a disposition of the will, in this case, the beneficient disposition that is central to the virtue of charity.
Both Kant and Sidgwick's language in this case finds its philosophical roots in one of the predominant influences of Western thought, Aristotle. Virtue, for Aristotle, is a state of character which makes a person good and which make him do his work well. We may understand that proper dispositions of the will are necessary for possessing virtue. Virtue is possible by cultivating such dispositions. Dispositions, furthermore, are cultivated through moral education, through a schooling of feelings and inclinations to act in certain ways. This is possible because there is a cognitive aspect of the non-rational.

The virtue of gratitude is marked by the dispositions of appreciativeness, goodwill, and respect. It is these which ought to be cultivated for the virtue of gratitude is needed for one to act effectively on the obligation of gratitude.

This enriched understanding of moral attitudes helps us understand another aspect of Weiss's argument. Not only did she claim that feelings of gratitude are required, but furthermore that acts of gratitude and demonstrations of gratitude in the form of actions are not required by gratitude. While she conceded that feelings of gratitude often do lead to grateful actions, such actions cannot be said to be required. Without entertaining her exact argument for this claim and providing our counter-argument, it is obvious from our discussion above that moral dispositions include the realm of actions as well as feelings. Dispositions provide reasons for the will to act and thus the sphere of action is part of the domain of obligation.

It is possible, however, for one to have a disposition of gratitude and not to act. Circumstances may prevent action. In this I agree with Weiss that a person constricted
in this manner is not open to moral censure. Consider, though, the person who has no dispositions characteristic of gratitude. Does she have obligation to perform actions of gratitude if she does not have the attitudes, the dispositions? The answer, I think, is yes. This person may not be motivated to act according to gratitude, but this does not mean that the obligation is not present. We blame such individuals for these faults of character and say that their actions, or lack thereof, are wrong.

To conclude, this section has defined gratitude as the creation of a moral relationship between individuals by the voluntary, intentional and non-coercive bestowal of a benefit from a donor to a recipient with a benevolent motivation to aid the recipient. The obligation of gratitude is a response on the part of the recipient that includes cultivating attitudes or dispositions of gratitude which underlie the required actions of gratitude. The extent of gratitude is a function of the motive of the benefactor and the perceived value of the benefit by the donor. If the provision of the benefit entailed a sacrifice or loss on the part of the donor, the obligation of gratitude will be greater and compensation by the recipient to the donor for this loss is included in the scope of the obligation.

We are now ready to apply the gratitude argument to that of filial obligations and discuss the implications and criticisms of gratitude as the basis for these obligations.

B. Argument

The argument for filial obligations based upon gratitude can be outlined as follows:

a. X owes Y gratitude if Y voluntarily, intentionally, and benevolently
provided a benefit to X in a non-coercive manner.

b. Parents intentionally and voluntarily benefit their children.

c. Parents benefit their children primarily for the sake of the children.

d. Parents do not coercively benefit their children.

e. It is not the case that it is not parents' business to benefit their children.

f. Therefore, children owe gratitude to their parents.

The argument from gratitude tells us why we think children have obligations to their parents. The discussion in the previous section concerning the nature of the relationship between donor and recipient in gratitude, also seems to make sense for parents and children. As we saw in the sections on friendship and on reciprocity, children and parents are never "free" of their relationship to one another, even if there exists no personal relationship. Using the definition of the gratitude argument given above, we will now examine how the content and extent of these obligations may be justified on this foundation.

Adult children have an obligation to cultivate attitudes of respect and goodwill toward their parents because the children were the objects of their parents' benevolence. They furthermore have a duty not to act in a manner contrary to these attitudes and to demonstrate them to their parents. The form of the actions required by gratitude may take any of the following forms, depending upon its relevance to the benefits provided:

a) To help the parents if they are in need or distress and the cost to oneself is no great cost to oneself.

b) To comply with the reasonable requests of the parents.
c) To avoid harming the parents and acting contrary to their interests.

Factors that will guide the children in the determination of the extent and relative strength of the gratitude response include the consideration of the motivation of their parents in providing the benefits and the value of the benefits that were given to the children. The degree of parental sacrifices and concessions will also be relevant to the extent of the obligations of the children. While gratitude does not require strict repayments in kind or degree, the type of the benefit provided to the children, whether biological, physical, monetary, _emotional_, and/or intellectual, will influence the children's attitudes and therefore shape the form of their actions for gratitude.

C. Implications

1. for (exclusively) biological parents

As stated in the parallel sections to this one, for personal identity (II.A.2.a.) and for reciprocity (II.C.2.a.), biological parents provide the benefit of life to a child through the act of conception, gestation and giving birth. The child has obligations of gratitude for receiving the benefit of existence. The problem for the existence of obligations of gratitude to biological parents is that the benefit must be provided by the parents beneficently for the child and it must be intentionally provided as well. However, some instances of conception are not undertaken _primarily_\(^9\) for the benefit of the child (because the parents want to have a baby for their own sake), and most instances of conception are not undertaken intentionally.\(^1\)\(^0\) However, when intentional conception is not obvious, it may be argued that the decision to carry a fetus to term and give birth to it constitutes a benefit to the child for which the child ought to be grateful. What
about situations in which such a choice does not exist and the mother had to carry the baby, even though conception was unintentional, and she does not wish to continue the pregnancy but has no choice? Would gratitude still be owed? No, because her action was not voluntary.

Sacrifice must also be considered here. Some have argued "sacrifice" can really not meaningfully apply to biological parents.¹⁰¹ This view seems wrong, I think, for cases of pregnancy and childbirth.

2. for (exclusively) caretaking parents

The most obvious implications of the gratitude argument are those for caretaking parents. Parents who benevolently provide nutrition, education, affection and comfort to their children, obviously benefit their children in substantial and important ways. Adult children have obligations of gratitude to their parents for all of the care given to them. Gratitude for the benefits of caretaking will most likely engender obligations for all three forms of action listed above.

One of the first questions that must be raised at this point concerns the issue of whether gratitude is appropriate in a situation where providing a benefit for the sake of another is the duty of the person. It may be argued, for example, that parents are merely "doing their duty" when they provide for or even when they sacrifice for their children. Since fulfilling a moral requirement usually is not considered deserving of praise,¹⁰² obligations of gratitude may not apply here. Simmons however provides cases of those engaged in duty-meeting where gratitude does seem appropriate and cases of fulfilling duty where gratitude is not appropriate. Let us look at Simmons example of fulfilling
our duty to aid those in need:

Suppose that I am driving through the country and come upon an accident victim. I am a medical student and know that if he does not reach a hospital in twenty minutes, he will die. But I also know that the only hospital in the area is twenty miles away over rough back roads. So I drive the victim at sixty miles an hour over rough roads in my brand new Porsche, saving his life and damaging its suspension. Now, I think that there are two things which can truly be said of this case. First, what I did, I had a duty to do; had I ignored the victim, or decided not to risk my Porsche, I would have earned the most serious moral blame. Second, the accident victim has an obligation to compensate me for the damage to my car, if it is within his means. He may have more of an obligation to me than this, but this much seems indisputable. And it seems that we can explain this obligation only in terms of gratitude. So here we have a case of duty-meeting conduct generating a debt of gratitude.\textsuperscript{103}

Simmons claims that this is a case of duty-meeting with an obligation of compensation from gratitude. While he readily admits that he can offer no clear principle to distinguish between duty-meeting cases where gratitude is owed and those where it is not,\textsuperscript{104} he thinks this case grounds gratitude because of the degree of the value of the benefit and the sacrifice of the donor. He concludes that gratitude may be owed in some cases of duty-meeting "where the obligation is undertaken for strongly benevolent reasons, or where the duty requires not that we refrain from directly harming another, but rather that we go out of our way to offer needed assistance, the fulfillment of the requirement seems to be an action deserving of praise."\textsuperscript{105} In this case, we praise the person who did his duty, because we recognize the effort that was made to do it, the motive of the donor to do his duty, and the value of the benefit to the recipient. The duties of parents to take care of their children in most cases fit with both of the conditions mentioned by Simmons - undertaken for strongly benevolent reasons and going out of their way to offer needed assistance. Obviously, as we mentioned in the parallel
section on reciprocity, obligations of gratitude would be forfeited or outweighed in the case of abusive or negligent parents.

When discussing the role of parents as caretakers, it is important for the argument from gratitude that we distinguish between "caretaking" and "caring about." Caretaking is role of fulfilling children's basic needs of nutrition, education and physical security. "Caring about" is providing kindness, love, emotional security and moral/spiritual guidance. Not all care takers may care about their children (children's homes, etc.), But usually we assume parents as caretakers also care about their children. It may be less difficult perhaps for children to cultivate attitudes of gratefulness to those who were not only caretakers but also cared about them in that special way. Providing clothes, food and shelter, even at luxurious levels, does not seem to engender the same feelings of gratitude as does the provision of kindness and love. However, as we have seen from our argument above, if the other conditions of gratitude have been met, it is the obligation of the child to cultivate the appropriate attitudes of gratitude and to engage in the appropriate behaviors.

D. Criticisms

There appear to be two arguments against justifying filial obligations on the argument from gratitude. The first is that the argument from gratitude, unlike that from reciprocity, does not provide specific content for the obligations. It does not say what the appropriate actions are in a given situation. Simmons says:

Unlike the obligation to honor a promise or a contract, where the content of the obligation is usually determined with some precision by the terms of the agreement, obligations of gratitude are more often less "content-specific." What we think that an obligation of gratitude requires an
individual to do will turn, of course, on the needs of the original benefactor and the position of the original beneficiary; but even when these factors are weighed, it will often be difficult to say that this or that particular act is required, or that some performance has discharged the obligation. Most often in acknowledging an obligation of gratitude to another, we are acknowledging a very general sort of indebtedness and an obligation to consider the interests of the obligee... in a special way in the future.\textsuperscript{106}

Simmons says, that maybe the benefit rendered will in some way be relevant to the content of the obligation.\textsuperscript{107}

We have, however, already answered such a criticism with the model proposed for the fulfillment of obligations of gratitude. By clarifying the factors (such as motive, value of benefit and degree of sacrifice) relevant for determining the degree of the obligation of gratitude and by specifying the three types of actions by which one ought to show gratitude (help donor when in need, answer reasonable requests, and avoid harming their interests), we have already gone a long way to making the obligation less vague and more directive.

The second criticism is that gratitude does not tell us anything about what we ought to do when we have competing obligations, even competing obligations of gratitude. Ross says that we can only determine the rightness of acts by determining for an agent in a certain circumstance, which act has the "greatest balance of prima facie rightness...over prima facie wrongness." He has, however, no strategy for how these aspect are to be compared.\textsuperscript{108} This is a problem since the hypothesis was that once the grounding of filial obligations was discovered, it would indicate the content and extent of filial obligations.

This, however, is not a strong enough argument to defeat gratitude. It is
disappointing that the grounding has not, on the surface at least, yielded the type of results expected. That does not mean however, that the argument itself was wrong, but that the hypothesis might have been mistaken. Additionally, it may still be the case that content and extent for certain paradigm cases may be determined and thus some sort of casuistic reasoning or extrapolation is possible.

E. Conclusion

In conclusion, gratitude appears to be the best candidate for the basis of filial obligations. The characteristics of the obligation fit the adult child - parent relationship more completely than the other candidates. We have not explored in depth, though, precisely what is required for the fulfillment of these obligations for children. That is the subject of Chapter Four.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter provided a systematic analysis of the leading candidates for the conceptual basis of filial obligation. The argument from personal identity and the argument from friendship were both shown to be unsuccessful in their bids to ground filial obligations. The argument from reciprocity was the strongest challenger to the argument from gratitude, however reciprocity did not capture those features which are most morally relevant and significant for filial relationship: the importance of the role of the motivations of the parents and the necessary feature of reciprocity, repayment, which seems to ill-fit the paradigmatic parent-child relationship. The argument from gratitude, as understood as the obligation to cultivate attitudes of gratitude towards one's
parents, is shown to be the superior and only choice for the conceptual foundation of filial obligations.

In Chapter Four, we will develop the model of gratitude for filial obligations more fully and we will discuss the types of actions required in general of adult children. We will also discuss those sorts of questions raised by the second objection to the argument above: how to make decisions in cases of competing obligations.
NOTES

1. Our consideration of the Chinese tradition on filial obligations was useful for at least two reasons. First, because this view was non-Western and its emphasis on filial obligations showed the universal importance of this type of obligation. Second, the inability to link the arguments of justification for filial obligations between the Western views and those of the Chinese make clear that the analysis pursued here is distinctly Western by nature. Any final argument for the grounding of filial obligations on a purely rational and philosophic basis is understood therefore to presuppose a basis in Western rational thought.


3. It is unclear what the connection is between Belliotti's sense of personal identity and that of Derek Parfit. Parfit, in Reasons-and-Persons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Part III, is concerned with identity criterion over time. Belliotti, though, is concerned more with the issue of what makes me "me." We may assume, at least, that Belliotti's theory includes both a bodily criterion and a psychological criterion, since he discusses the relative weights of the claims of biological parents and those of adoptive parents.

4. Belliotti quotes and relies on note #7 in his article: Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

5. Belliotti, 152.

6. Since this argument is an argument for why there are filial obligations based upon personal identity, it will be concerned with Belliotti's CSP, rather than MPP. MPP concerns itself with why parental interests ought to have priority over other interests.

7. "I accept unsqueamishly that we all bear moral requirements to our biological parents, notwithstanding the absence of an ongoing friendship" (Belliotti, 153); We must clarify, though, situations in which social conventions exist to relieve (especially) sperm donors of their obligations to the children their sperm produces. Certainly in such cases we may claim that the donors conversely waive their right to any obligation they might have due from the child. This would not of course mean that the child was no less influenced biologically by the donor, but only that any obligation from personal identity probably is waived (at least legally) in this case.


10. We will not pursue the troubling further question of how we may be able to judge cases of the first kind from cases of the second.


15. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, bk. VIII, ch. 1-14; bk. IX, ch. 1-7. The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1058-1086; Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education," in John Locke on Education, edited by Peter Gay (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University), 30 & 74-75. Unmentioned by English, both Aristotle and Locke argue that friendship is a characteristic of a "good" relationship between parent and adult child. Aristotle says that nature implants friendship in parents for their children and that friendship is the result of virtuous relationship [NE, 1158b20]. Locke also says that grown children ought to be friends with their parents, but neither Aristotle nor Locke argues that friendship is the justification or foundation for filial obligation. They only argue that friendship ought to exist between these two, but they do not hang filial obligations in general on this relationship. Both argue the filial obligations are more appropriately understood as duties arising from gratitude. The differences in their arguments are discussed below. For a fuller explication of Aristotle's understanding of the role of friendship in the adult child - parent relationship, see Jeffrey Blustein, Parents and Children: the Ethics of the Family (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 46.


18. English does say, as mentioned above, that the general obligation to aid the needy would still compel adult children to give assistance to their parents who needed certain help. She does not, however, say what form this aid would take, nor to what extent, nor does she specify in what circumstances she thinks this aid would be required. She is also assuming a particular definition of "an obligation to help the needy" which she further assumes would compel people in general to help others in the ways that children might help parents.

19. While English holds that there are no obligations to parents per se absent filial obligations, she does believe that "there are many things that children ought to do for their parents" (351).


22. English, 352.


25. But he argues that parents and adult children have qualities that friends lack. Kupfer’s view is that the adult child’s love is grounded in a particular kind of gratitude. The adult child is grateful for a history of interaction and love which contributed to his/her nature (Kupfer, 23).

26. Aristotle and Locke, as seen in Chapter Two, discuss filial friendship, but they do not posit friendship as the foundation of the moral relationship between parent and child. For a good discussion of Aristotle’s views of the friendship between father and son, see Blustein, 39-46.

27. Lawrence C. Becker, *Reciprocity* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 4; Aristotle claimed that reciprocity "fits neither distributive not rectificatory justice," but is appropriate to be called just when what is exchanged is equal in proportion. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. V;Ch. 5 (New York: Random House, 1941), 1010.


29. Rawls, 114.


31. Blackstone qualifies that the children ought to support the parents "in case they stand in need of assistance" the need is the motivating factor. We will discuss the role of "need" in filial obligations later in this chapter.

32. An unspoken premise of the reciprocity argument is that "ought implies can." Children cannot be morally held accountable for failure to provide that which is not within their means.

33. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VIII:Ch. 14:20: [B]eing in debt, he should repay, but there is nothing by doing which a son will have done the equivalent of what he has received, so that he is always in debt.

34. Appeals to limitations on reciprocity obligations justified by commitments to one’s own projects may be more difficult for this case than it appears; the benefit of life, provided by the biological parents, is the pre-condition for the ability to even form one’s own projects. This must be accounted for when such limitations are being considered.
35. Becker includes as a necessary part of his definition of reciprocity what he calls the proportionality principle: We are to reciprocate in ways that are proportionate and fitting to the goods received. Becker states that parental care that is indirect will likely produce only filial obligations for some sort of equally indirect reciprocity (211).

36. Becker flushes out these implications for filial obligations as well; see 210.


38. Becker raises this objection to his version of reciprocity (139-140). He refutes it for his understanding of reciprocity, which escapes this criticism. His argument for reciprocity is based on an understanding of the concept as a dispositional deontic virtue. I do not pursue his argument here for I believe 1) that it is sufficiently different from most accounts of reciprocity to be unhelpful for understanding the general claims classical accounts of reciprocity and 2) more importantly, I believe that his version of reciprocity is in fact merely redefining the virtue-based traditional understanding-of-gratitude as "reciprocity."

39. In her argument against reciprocity English claimed, "the idiom of owing favors to one's parents can actually be destructive if it undermines the role of mutuality and leads us to think in terms of quantitative reciprocal favors" (English, 356).

40. This method is analogous to the Hedonistic Paradox - the best way to obtain pleasure is not to aim directly at it. Likewise, the best way to fulfill filial obligations is not to keep score, but to act upon one's feelings.

41. Becker, 130.

42. Becker, 138.

43. English, 351-356; The function of this part of English's argument appears to be a negative argument for her position of friendship based filial obligations. Her goal here is to argue that past attempts to ground filial obligations have failed. This failure leads her to search for a better way to understand the basis of filial obligations. However, her claim is not as broad as she asserts. The dismissal of the "owing" idiom does not argue against all other possible foundations for filial obligations. For example, it is not clear that English takes herself to be arguing against reciprocity or against gratitude. Gratitude itself, however, may not be ruled out as a ground of filial obligation by her arguments.

Of course, this is not a full-fledged argument against English's view, nor would it pose as much of a threat to English's position even if it were; the most it could say is that a consideration of debt does not rule out all of the serious contenders for justification of filial obligations. English could reply that this was not her purpose in this section; that she merely wanted to make a point about debt and solely to show its inadequacy, with no pretensions to any grander assertions. If she chooses to make this reply, then we wonder why she asserts the strong claim that no other duties to parents exist if friendship is not present. Why wouldn't she argue merely that friendship can ground filial obligations, but lacking friendship, some other
ground may be found. Since this most assuredly is not her argument, it is reasonable for us to conclude that she believes her dismissal of "debt" is a dismissal of all other possible justifications for filial obligations. Her claim is an unnecessarily strong one and, as we have seen, is not supported by her argument.

44. English, 352.
45. English, 352.
46. English, 352.
47. Since repayment or "owing" is not a feature of voluntary sacrifice, as it is of favors, the language of debt is not accurately applicable to filial obligations.
48. Bellioti, 150.
49. Bellioti, 151.
50. Bellioti, 151.
51. English, 352.
52. Claudia Card, "Gratitude and Obligation," American Philosophical Quarterly 25(2) (April 1988): 115-127. Card calls attention to what she calls the paradox about debts of gratitude; If that for which gratitude is due was neither for sale nor a mere loan but was in some sense gratis, what sense does it make to feel indebted for it? How can one repay such a debt without transforming the transaction into one in which gratitude has no place? What kind of debt is this? (115); Daniel Lyons, in "The Odd Debt of Gratitude" Analysis 29(1) (October 1968): 92-97, asks, "What kind of debt can the debtor owe and yet the creditor be expected to disclaim? The debt of gratitude" (92).
53. A. John Simmons, Moral Principles and Political Obligations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 164; "Typically, obligations of gratitude in such cases will involve making up for sacrifices made or losses incurred by another in the act of rendering us assistance or providing us with benefits." So he considers the compensation owed in some cases to be explained by gratitude; See also 179-180 for an example of such a case for Simmons.
55. Simmons, 169-170.
57. Berger, 299; See also Simmons, 171.

58. Paul F. Camenisch, "Gift and Gratitude in Ethics," The Journal of Religious Ethics 9 (Spring 1981): 11. It should be added, however, that the presence of an additional motive does not nullify the obligation of gratitude. The problem is only in those cases where a motive other than intentional benevolence is the one guiding the action; See also Berger, 299.

59. Berger, 299.


62. Simmons, 176; See Simmons, 175-177. He lists what he considers to be five necessary conditions (though he states he is not sure they are jointly sufficient) for the "generation" of an obligation of gratitude:

1. The benefit must be granted by means of some special effort or sacrifice.
2. The benefit must not be granted unintentionally, involuntarily, or for disqualifying reasons.
3. The benefit must not be forced (unjustifiably) on the beneficiary against his will.
4. The beneficiary must want the benefit, or, 4a, it must be the case that the beneficiary would want the benefit if certain impairing conditions were corrected.
5. The beneficiary must not want the benefit not to be provided by the benefactor, or, 5a, it must be the case that the beneficiary would not want the benefit not to be provided by the benefactor if certain impairing conditions were corrected (178-179).

Conditions 2 and 3 have been included in the discussion of the second feature of the table. Condition 1 will be discussed by the third feature and conditions 4 and 5 will be included, and rejected in the discussion of the fifth feature of the gratitude table.


(G1) Y has done something that benefits X.
(G2) Y’s action was voluntary.
(G3) Y intended to benefit X.
(G4) X and Y both believe that what Y has done involved sacrifice or concession on his part.
Some would add an additional condition.
(G5) X accepts what Y has done (105-106).
My chart also includes the conditions necessary for the fulfillment of the obligation of gratitude as well as those necessary for the existence of the obligation.

63. Simmons, 176; As Simmons says, a more complete understanding of the problems of paternalism would greatly aid this aspect of the gratitude analysis. Though this is not possible here, the examples provided are enough to consider the application of obligations of gratitude to the argument for filial obligations.


65. Camenisch, 2.


67. Simmons, 170-171, emphasis added.

68. Lombardi, 106.


70. As stated above, this is the value of the benefit as perceived by the donor.

71. This is because "sacrifice" is not a necessary condition for the obligation of gratitude.


73. Berger, 302.

74. Camenisch, 12.

75. Camenisch, 7; Lombardi, 106.

76. Simmons, 178-179.

77. Simmons, 178.

78. Camenisch, 4.


80. Card, 117.
81. Simmons, 163-164.

82. Simmons, 164.


84. Weiss, 494.

85. Weiss, 494; The appropriate circumstances to which Weiss refers are a set of jointly sufficiently conditions she puts forth. These are relevantly similar to the conditions for the existence of the obligation of gratitude that I described above.


88. Kant, Lectures on Ethics, 221.

89. Kant, The Metaphysics of Morals, Doctrine of Virtues, Pt. II, Ch. I, Sec. I, Para. 33, 249. However, as noted by Claudia Card, 118 & 125, Kant took a different attitude in Lectures on Ethics, when discussing duties to oneself. There he said;

We can carry the argument further and say that to accept favours and benefits is also a breach of one's duty to oneself. If I accept favours, I contract debts which I can never repay, for I can never get on equal terms with him who has conferred the favours upon me; he had stolen a march upon me, and if I do him a favour I am only returning a quid pro quo; I shall always owe him a debt of gratitude, and who will accept such a debt? For to be indebted is to be subject to an unending constraint. I must for ever be courteous and flattering towards my benefactor, and if I fail to be so he will very soon make me conscious of my failure; I may even be forced to using subterfuge so as to avoid meeting him. But he who pays promptly for everything is under no constraint (118-119).

90. Simmons, 166.


92. Sidgwick, 244.

93. Sidgwick, 245.

94. Weiss, 494-495.
95. Weiss, 496.

96. Weiss, 493.

97. Sidgwick, 239.

98. Aristotle, *NE* 1106a10; 1106a23.

99. Recall our earlier discussion where we claim that other motivations may be present, but that the primary one must be that of benevolence to the recipient.

100. It may matter for such an argument here whether the claim is that the intentionality must be present for a particular instance of sexual intercourse or whether the claim is that the couple may be in general intending conception. The later claim may be more difficult to hold for the child might respond that the benefit was not intended to benefit her in particular.


102. Simmons, 182.

103. Simmons, 179-180.

104. Simmons, 181.

105. Simmons, 181-182.

106. Simmons, 167-168.

107. Simmons, 169

108. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, 41-42. See also Baruch A. Brody, *Life and Death Decision-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). In footnotes #7 and #8 on 96-97, Brody makes this point about Ross saying, "...it is clear that Ross sees judgments about which appeals take precedence as judgments not based on any weighing on a common scale." Brody's model for moral decision-making that provides a "systematic theory of when each moral appeal has greater or lesser significance."
CHAPTER FOUR

FILIAL OBLIGATIONS OF GRATITUDE

I. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we discussed the obligation of gratitude as the obligation to cultivate the attitudes which are constitutive of the virtue of gratitude. In the first part of this chapter, we examine what are the particular attitudes encompassed by gratitude, and to what types of actions they might commit us. In this way, we will lay out the fine structure of the gratitude obligation, making clear what the fulfillment of the obligation entails.

In the second part of this chapter, we will turn our attention to the fulfillment of the obligations of gratitude. We will show how the gratitude structure applies. However, we will see that decisions concerning the choice of one action over another need context to determine which alternatives are of the action-type required by gratitude. We will also conclude that final choices among alternatives will be dependent upon the values and commitments of the particular society in which the case is located.

Before continuing, we ought to consider a question that was raised earlier, but perhaps not fully answered: could we have filial obligations that were not gratitude obligations? The answer to this seems to be that while it is indeed possible and probable to imagine that individual adult children may have obligations to parents other than those of gratitude, such other obligations are not, in the strict sense of our definition, filial
obligations. The mere fact that an obligation obtains between parents and children does not make it a filial obligation as we have been using the term in this analysis. If a child promises to visit a parent, to then not visit would constitute a failure of the obligation of promise-keeping, not necessarily a failure of the filial obligations. (Even if promise-keeping is part of the gratitude obligation, its independent justification leads us to consider it not unique to filial obligation.) Gratitude was chosen as the foundation of filial obligations because it best captured the inherent nature of the relationship between parents and children. This is not to say that other obligations are not present. But strictly speaking, these are not filial obligations.

II. The Grammar1 of Gratitude

A. Attitudes of Gratitude

In Chapter Three we claimed that the obligation of gratitude was characterized by certain dispositional attitudes and that these attitudes were determinative for action. Let us begin with a discussion of what attitudes are involved in the virtue of gratitude. A.D.M. Walker identified three attitudes that he claims are at the core of the grateful response.2 He claims, "Gratitude, ... involves attitudes both towards the benefit and towards the benefactor: we must properly appreciate the benefit and have goodwill and respect for our benefactor."3 The attitudes of "appreciation," "goodwill," and "respect" are neither analyzed nor argued by Walker. We begin, then, with a discussion of appreciation and goodwill. Respect is an attitude that is neither central to the gratitude response, nor is it uniquely justified by gratitude. We can readily imagine having a
gratitude obligation toward one whom we do not respect and we can also conceive of respecting those to whom we have no obligation of gratitude. We shall not therefore, consider respect a significant attitude of gratitude as defined in this work.

1. Appreciation

Appreciation is an attitude possessed by one who has received or perceives she has received something of worth from another. Such an attitude leads one to be positively disposed. The object of appreciation may be either the benefit received or the benevolence of the benefactor. In other words, one may be appreciative of receiving a benefit or of the attitude of the donor towards one. The use of the verb "appreciate" does not readily betray which of these objects is meant. We regularly use "to appreciate," for example, in such cases as the following: "I appreciate the extra time you have given me to finish the paper," where the object is seemingly the benefit of extra time. However, the object could also be understood as the benevolence you exhibited toward me by allowing me extra time; "I appreciate your coming tonight," where the object may be the benefit that your presence brings, or the object may be the benevolence on your part that your presence indicates; "I appreciate your time and thoughtfulness," where the object may be the benefit that I received from the dedication of your time and effort on my behalf, or the object may be your benevolence. We shall distinguish these two objects for appreciation, by calling the former appreciation in the First Sense (object=benefit) and calling the latter, appreciation in the Second Sense (object=benevolence of donor).

Appreciation in the First Sense appears to be the view supported by Walker. He
claims that appreciation is (only) a positive attitude on the part of the recipient directed towards the benefit. "Gratitude requires appreciation of the benefits we receive." Walker believes that appreciation is an attitude concerning the positive valuation of the benefit by the recipient and that attitudes concerning the benefactor are the distinct ones of goodwill and respect.

A disposition directed towards the value of the benefit seems indeed to be a part of the gratitude response. We appreciate the benefit and part of what it means to be grateful and to show gratitude is to express how much we value the benefit. Does the degree of intensity of the disposition of appreciation depend on the perceived value of the benefit to the recipient? In other words, would the appreciation on the part of the recipient be dependent on how much she wanted or valued the benefit?

At this point we ought to recall from Chapter Three that one of the necessary features for determining the extent of gratitude is the value of the benefit to the donor. We argued that gratitude is due even if the benefit is not valued by the recipient but only by the donor. This is because we ought to recognize the motive behind the donor's action. This leads us more towards appreciation in the Second Sense. If we claim that the degree or intensity of the disposition of appreciation is affected by how much the benefit is valued by the donor, then in effect we are also saying that the disposition of appreciation is directed in this case towards the donor's attitudes. Appreciation would not be directed to the benefit, but to the donor's goodwill and generosity to the recipient. This would make appreciation different from the way that Walker uses it. In the case that the donor's perceived value of the benefit would be that which counts, then the
appreciation would not be of the benefit, but of the donor, or more precisely, of the goodwill and generosity of the donor.

Appreciation in the Second Sense is directed towards the benefactor and her benevolence. This appears to be the view of Kant: "But even mere heartfelt benevolence [on the part of the donor], apart from any such act (of beneficence), is already a basis of obligation to gratitude. A grateful disposition of this kind is called appreciativeness."\(^5\) Kant says that the attitude on the part of the donor is the basis for the attitude of appreciation. The recipient is responding to the benevolence of the donor and not to any act or benefit the donor provided.

This definition of appreciation raises indirectly one of the criticisms that has been raised against the gratitude analysis argued for in Chapter Three. Not only, under this second sense of appreciation, is the benevolence of the benefactor relevant for the recipient’s obligation, but the existence of the gratitude obligation is based upon the presence of an intentional, benevolent motivation on the part of the benefactor. The criticism concerning the usefulness of such an account of gratitude is, how does the recipient know what the motive of the benefactor is? Of course, whatever difficulty is present learning the existence or extent of the benefactor’s benevolence does not argue necessarily against the analysis itself, but it will make the recipient’s task more difficult. Nevertheless, the benefactor’s disposition may make itself known by the way the benefit is delivered. This point is made by Aquinas who argues that,

\[\text{God alone sees man’s disposition in itself: but in so far as it is shown by certain signs, man also can know it. It is thus that a benefactor’s disposition is known by the way in which he does the kindly action, for instance through his doing it joyfully and readily.}\] \(^6\)
Finally, there are those who appear to hold the view that appreciation is best understood as referring to both Senses. Seneca and Aquinas argue that appreciation is not merely concerned with the benefit that one receives, but rather with the attitude of the donor/benefactor as well. According to these philosophers, appreciation may be directed toward the benefactor and the benevolence motivating her action as well as towards the benefit itself. Seneca stated:

We are sometimes under a greater obligation to one who has given little with a large heart, and has bestowed a small favor, yet willingly (On Benefit).

A Kindly action consists not in deed or gift, but in the disposition of the giver or doer (De Benefit i). 

Aquinas argues:

"Every moral act depends on the will. Hence a kindly action, insofar as it is praiseworthy and is deserving of gratitude, consists materially in the thing done, but formally and chiefly in the will (of the donor)."

As we discussed in Chapter Three, a necessary feature for the existence of an obligation of gratitude is the benevolent motive of the donor. If gratitude is indeed a "response to benevolence" as Berger stated, then there ought to be a disposition which is oriented as a response to the benevolence of the donor. If we understand appreciation to include both senses, as appreciation of the benefit and appreciation for the benevolence of the benefactor, then we have identified such a disposition.

2. Goodwill

Goodwill is the positive inclination of the will, including kindly feelings, directed toward another. Unlike appreciation, goodwill can only be directed to another person. It does not make sense to say that someone has goodwill to an object. In the case of
gratitude, goodwill is the positive attitude a recipient has towards the benefactor for 1) being the source of the benefit and 2) for the benevolence that the donor has shown. The latter is responsible for the reciprocal nature of gratitude. When one recognize that another's actions were motivated out of particular regard for her (see Chapter Three, benefit voluntarily and intentionally given primarily for the sake of the recipient), it leads one to talk as if she ought to "pay back" the donor, or that she now has a "debt of gratitude" to the donor. The disposition of goodwill includes reciprocal goodwill to the donor. Gratitude for the benevolence, or goodwill displayed to us by a benefactor, includes not just appreciation for the benefactor's benevolence, but also includes goodwill directed to the benefactor in return. It is a particular type of goodwill that is secured by the goodwill of the donor. This is the reciprocal nature of gratitude. One does not "pay back" the benefit (reciprocity), but rather one reciprocates the goodwill that the donor has for her.

Goodwill as an attitude of gratitude raises an interesting issue however. Goodwill does not seem to be uniquely significant for gratitude. Ought we not have goodwill toward everyone, regardless of whether they benefitted us? The answer here appears to be yes.

However, as we have said, the goodwill that we are discussing here is of a special sort. It is the attitude towards another that is engendered by the other's benevolence to us in particular. Our attitude is to show or have goodwill especially for this other person because he has voluntarily, intentionally, and in a non-coercive manner, benefitted us for our own sake. In addition to the goodwill we ought to bear others in general, we ought
to have a stronger or deeper sense of goodwill for the individual who is our donor.

To summarize, the attitudes that are necessary for the virtue of gratitude include appreciation and goodwill. Appreciation ought to be understood as a positive attitude directed toward both the benefit received and the benevolence of the benefactor. Goodwill is that attitude that is directed toward the benefactor for being the source of the benefit and for the goodwill that the benefactor has shown the recipient. We will now turn our attention to the matter of the actions that are required or included in the gratitude response rooted in these attitudes. 

B. Actions and Gratitude

Now that we have located at least what seem to be important, relevant attitudes that are central to the gratitude response, the next question is the relation of actions of gratitude to these attitudes. As was stated in Chapter Three, attitudes give reasons for actions precisely because they are dispositions or attitudes of the will, and as such form the basis of rational action. The actions, or kinds of actions, called for by the attitudes of gratitude are the focus of this section.

1. Attitudes of Gratitude and Reasons for Actions

Before we look at the types of actions that may be required by the attitudes of gratitude, it may be helpful for us to sort out the relation between appreciation and goodwill and how they are connected to grateful actions.

Paul F. Camenisch makes an interesting distinction between two different types of actions of gratitude, that of "grateful use" and "grateful conduct." These categories of action appear to correspond with our distinction between appreciation in the First
Sense and appreciation in the Second Sense as well as between the two senses of goodwill. The chart below shows how we think the dispositions are related to each other and what classifications of actions they justify.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISPOSITION</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Appreciation First Sense (Object = benefit)</td>
<td>Grateful Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Goodwill for being source of benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Appreciation Second Sense (Object = donor’s benevolence)</td>
<td>Grateful Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Goodwill in return for donor’s benevolence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can easily see a connection between grateful use of a benefit and appreciation in the First Sense and goodwill. If we have a disposition that we ought to cultivate that is directed to positive valuing of a benefit received, then one of the ways that we express our gratitude and our goodwill because of the gift, is to value the benefit, especially in the way that the donor does.

Camenisch describes the recipient obligation of grateful use as follows:

Would not most persons readily agree that I had committed a morally censurable violation if, having told my old philosophy professor that I was grateful for the gift of a rare edition of Kant’s works, I then gave them to a paper recycling drive? Would not the goodness of the gift in itself and in relation to my needs and desires, which is implied in the donor’s giving the gift and which is presumably reaffirmed by my grateful response, now be denied by such inappropriate use? Similarly, could we not easily agree that great-great grandmother’s silver service given into my hands by my
mother is not to be used for chemistry experiments, or that a medical education supported by donations from my low-income doctorless Appalachian village is not to be used to make me rich in the big over-doctored city? This connection between gift and its appropriate use is often expressed in theological/ethical language in terms of stewardship or trusteeship.\textsuperscript{10}

Gilbert Meilaender\textsuperscript{11} considers that grateful use may be considered by many to restrict freedom too much. Meilaender makes the point that the examples Camenisch used are obviously failures of obligation, but that grateful use is not that clear:

Suppose I give the rare edition of Kant's works to a genuine scholar (someone who positively revels in pondering the antinomies into which reason falls when it peers beyond it limits). Have I misused my professor's gift? Or what if, knowing that I will never again look at Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, much less the Critique of Pure Reason, I sell this rare edition in order to take my wife on a trip to Germany (including, of course, Konigsberg) - a trip she richly deserves but which we could pay for in other way? Would my old philosophy professor approve? And if he disapproves, does that show I have failed in my obligation of "grateful use" or that he did not really give freely?.... suppose I am that doctor whose medical education was financed in part by the poor townspeople of the village in which I grew up. Not to go back as their doctor because I prefer becoming rich "in the big over-doctored city" would probably bespeak a failure in my obligation to sue their gift gratefully. I suspect, though, that such choices are usually more difficult. Probably when I left that community to study medicine I intended nothing other than to return as a physician in the community. But their gift has broadened my horizons. I have discovered not just new pleasure but also new talents and abilities which I possess. I have come to believe that these talents suit me best for a different calling-that, for example, I am best suited to work in a teaching hospital connected with a large university. This is the sort of choice people really face, and when considering it we are, I think, less certain what grateful use of such a gift may require. With respect to gratitude in particular we may say what G.H. von Wright said of virtue in general: "The path of virtue is never laid out in advance."\textsuperscript{12}

Camenisch, however, recognizes the variety of response that Meilaender calls for;

There will also be borderline cases in which it will be unclear whether a particular use of a gift is in keeping with or is a violation of the obligation
to grateful use. And in some cases the recipient may be able to enlarge upon the donor’s intentions by some creative and previously unenvisioned use of the gift. But any such indeterminateness in the content of this obligation does not change its status as obligation.\(^{13}\)

Grateful use is really about how to use the gifts that parents give to their children. While this is an important part of filial obligations, we are going to primarily focus on what children ought to do towards the care of their parents rather than on the equally interesting issue of how children may or may not be obligated to use the gifts that parents gave to them when young.

Grateful conduct, according to Camenisch, is the way that the recipient shows gratitude to the benefactor through her own actions. What Camenisch seems to be saying is that grateful conduct is the way that the recipient shows the benefactor that she values the benefactor’s attitude toward her - that she appreciates the benefactor’s goodwill towards her, as was evidenced in the benefit that was given. The actions of grateful conduct will be those that show the appreciation and goodwill that the recipient now has for the donor. As was stated above, reciprocity is retained in the conception of showing goodwill to those who were first to show goodwill to me.

We turn now to Camenisch’s discussion for the recipient obligation of grateful conduct:

By "grateful conduct" I refer to any of those various actions by which the recipient shows gratitude to the benefactor. The possibilities are legion, ranging from a simple "thank you" to dedicating one’s life to serving the donor. In any given case they might include imitation of the donor, a return gift to the donor, or obeying the donor. All forms of grateful conduct, however, would come under Kant’s definition of gratitude as "honoring a person because of a kindness he has done us." This obligation is related to the gift only as to its basis or ground. Its content will derive not from the nature of the gift, but from prevalent notions
about what forms of conduct best show gratitude.\textsuperscript{14}

We will focus on the actions of grateful conduct for the remainder of this work and will discuss what kinds or types of actions will satisfy the requirement of grateful conduct.

2. Attitudes of Gratitude and Types of Actions

We turn our attention now to the types of actions that the attitudes of gratitude may require us to perform. Walker identified four types of actions that may be justified by the attitude of goodwill.\textsuperscript{15} He pursues only one of these for his purpose of justifying political obligations by gratitude. In the following, we have modified and adapted three of his action-types for this analysis. In addition, we hold that these action-types are also justified by the different senses of appreciation that were presented and argued for above. After the discussion of the types of actions that are required by the attitudes of gratitude, we will briefly discuss the limitations to actions of gratitude and the scope of such types of actions.

Before we discuss the actions of gratitude, we ought to say something about the argument for why these particular action-types are the actions required by gratitude. Other than stating that these actions may be justified by goodwill, Walker himself does not give such an argument. The actions of gratitude listed below may seem intuitively justified to some. Still others, however, may find it difficult to accept this explanation; either for metaethical reasons concerning the justification of moral intuitions themselves or merely because they claim differing intuitions concerning actions of gratitude. The argument for these actions admittedly deserves extended treatment. Due to the nature of this project as a sustained philosophical analysis of the geography of filial obligations,
we will say at this time only that these action-types appear to represent the general agreement in Western European society concerning actions of gratitude. Such a justification seems also to be supported by what we have already noted Camenisch to be saying above: "content [of the gratitude obligation] will derive...from prevalent notions about what forms of conduct best show gratitude."

We proceed then to the three types of actions initially identified by Walker that may be required by the attitudes of appreciation and goodwill are the following:

1. To avoid harming the donor or acting contrary to the donor's interests.
2. To help the donor if she/he is in need or distress and one can do so at no great cost to oneself.
3. To comply with the donor's reasonable requests.

The first action type, "Do not act contrary to the interests of the donor," is supported by appreciation and goodwill. Appreciation of the donor for being the source of the benefit and goodwill for her goodwill, lead to the duty of grateful conduct. This type of action may be the minimum requirement of grateful conduct. Grateful conduct includes not only not harming the donor, but also, not acting contrary to interests of donor. This is a duty of forbearance towards those who have done good for me. Walker states,

Admittedly, some of the actions proscribed by [1,] (for example, the infliction of physical harm on a benefactor) may owe their proscription on grounds of ingratitude to their being already proscribed by some other obligation. But this is not true of all the actions that come within the scope of the principle. It is not true, conspicuously, of some of the actions that involve damage to a benefactor's interests rather than physical harm to him. We do have a particular obligation of gratitude to be mindful of our benefactor's interests, to take care not to damage them,
and to give them a special weight in our deliberations. Most of us, for example, do not scruple in casual conversation to pass on gossip about mutual acquaintances; nor do we, I believe, have any general obligation to abstain from gossip. If, however, the gossip concerns someone who has given me a great deal of help, I do feel myself under an obligation not to retail it: I have an obligation to protect my benefactor’s reputation, and passing on the gossip is incompatible with the regard I should have for his interests. Again, as a member of a committee, I may feel an obligation not to vote for a proposal which would significantly damage my benefactor’s interests. Doubtless this obligation will almost always be outweighed by my duty, as a member of the committee, to some wider good; but even so, I shall apologize to my benefactor for having acted in a way that adversely affects his interests— a fact which surely suggests the existence of an obligation that has been overridden. Rather differently, I may feel an obligation not to put myself in competition with a benefactor, and take care to avoid situations in which I can succeed only at his expense. We do indeed, it seems, have an obligation of gratitude not to damage our benefactors’ interests, and the obligatoriness of the actions required under this rubric does not, in general, depend on their being already obligatory for another reason.  

There are those who might respond, as Walker points out, that injuring a donor’s interests, say for example in competition, may be the result of acting from self-interest, ignorance and/or indifference, rather than ill will. There is a difference, they might claim, between gossip and competition. In the first, one is acting with malicious intent, but in the second, one may have no negative intentions to another, but may be merely pursuing her own self-survival. Those in this second situation are surely (so it may be thought) not guilty of ingratitude. Walker says in response to this however,

\begin{quote}
The possession of ill will is but one way of lacking goodwill: indifference, absence of concern, and want of consideration may all, as much as ill will, betray lack of goodwill for a person. So actions can show a lack of goodwill without being motivated by ill will.  
\end{quote}

The second type of action that is required by grateful conduct is to help the donor if she/he is in need and there is no great cost to oneself. This type of action needs
stronger justification than the previous one. The greater the cultivation of the attitudes of appreciation and goodwill, the more likely it is that grateful conduct will include this type of action. Consequently, the obligation to cultivate the attitudes of appreciation and goodwill will be stronger the greater the degree of value of the benefit as perceived by the donor and as determined by the motive of the donor. Additionally, when sacrifice is present, the greater the degree of sacrifice by the donor, the greater the gratitude obligation.

This second type of action is a duty of beneficence where the needs of the donor generate rights to the help of the recipient. Appreciation of the donor's benevolence to the recipient and reciprocal goodwill justify grateful conduct towards the donor. Surely this includes helping the donor when she/he is in need and the recipient is in a position to provide a benefit to the former donor. The addition of the clause, "if there is no great cost to oneself" needs some explanation. Helping the needy benefactor is not the obligation, but rather helping the needy benefactor when the recipient is so able, is the obligation. This type of action is not obligatory if the cost to the recipient would be too great. How one measures the extent of the cost will not be discussed here, however, this most probably would be a determination left to the individual.

The third type of action required by attitudes of gratitude is to accede to the reasonable requests of the donor. This is the most stringent type of action requirement thus far. Grateful conduct here is based on the understanding that the wishes of the donor generate claims on the recipients. The presence of this action-type as an obligation will depend on the strength and extent of the pre-conditions for having a gratitude
obligation (e.g., strength of the benevolent motive with which the benefit was given, the presence of sacrifice on the part of the donor, etc.). With this type of action there is the issue of how to determine what makes a request "reasonable." This will vary with the circumstances for each type of gratitude obligation. What may be a reasonable request from a donor to a recipient when the extent of the gratitude obligation is very great may not be reasonable when the extent of the obligation is not so very great. Additionally, what counts as reasonable may in fact be context dependent (see below for a fuller discussion of this concept). In some contexts, requests from donors concerning the personal behavior of the recipient are not at all reasonable. The opposite may be true for other situations.

III. Gratitude and Filial Obligations

So far we have talked about gratitude in a theoretical way. In this final section, we will discuss the scope and limitations of gratitude obligations and we will apply the analysis of gratitude to filial obligations.

A. Scope and Specificity

We have discussed the three types of actions that we believe are the basis of grateful conduct. We now consider the issue of how to choose the specific form of a grateful response. For each action-type there may be a wide variety of possible specific actions that may fulfill the required type. The analysis of the obligation of gratitude does not extend to arguments for choosing the correct (right, appropriate) action from a field of possible actions representative of the required type. There are primarily two lines of
argument for this position.

The first argument centers on the understanding of the importance of freedom within the gratitude response. Part of what gratitude includes is the spontaneity, the freedom to choose the ways in which gratitude will take shape in our lives. This point is made especially by Meiläender. He says a life characterized by gratitude is stamped at least as deeply by freedom as by obligation. According to him, gratitude as an obligation leaves us free to fulfill it in countless ways, that our way need be no one else’s and no one else’s way need be ours, and that once we see that at least some gifts can never be repaid, we may recognize that gratitude is something more than just a duty; it is a way of life. Gratitude admits a freedom of response, it is not "tit for tat" like reciprocity. A person is free to choose the particular way her response meets the obligation.

Meiläender says that

The language of virtue recognizes gratitude as an obligation which shatters the boundaries of our usual talk about duties; for gratitude is finally not a duty to be discharged but an attitude which must pervade and shape the whole of life.

The second argument centers on the understanding of the importance of the social (cultural and religious) contexts in which gratitude will come to bear. While the analysis presented thus far is one that is non-relative and strictly objective for a Western philosophical understanding of filial obligation - the obligation to cultivate attitudes of gratitude and to fulfill the demands of grateful conduct - what counts as fulfilling the obligation of grateful conduct will be relative to the acceptable forms, societal norms and beliefs specific to different communities and contexts. H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., is
a philosopher who is known to support and defend such views. What counts as fulfilling the gratitude obligation in one community, may not count at all in another. Additionally, within one belief community, the set of possible actions which fulfill an action type of grateful conduct may lead to one choice whereas a different set of possible actions in the same community may lead to another. And of course, of equally acceptable actions within a set, the presence of individual freedom mentioned above, also makes different choices morally acceptable.

Consider, for example, a Viking in which society a man raises a son to be strong, forward looking and not to show any emotion. A son who had benefitted from a father’s unselfish help and benevolence has gratitude obligations. If the father is weak, and lays dying from wounds, and the son shows emotion or stays away from the hunt to help take care of the father, the father will be ashamed and embarrassed and feel that the child is ungrateful. If the son shows no emotion at the father’s dying and even ignores the father, the father will be proud of the son and consider himself honored and respected by the son.

This seems counter-intuitive to us (and to Chinese as well!), because we have different ideas about how it is that we ought to show the possession of gratitude. In this respect only is the choice of specific action to show gratitude relative. The possession of gratitude however is an objective, non-relative moral obligation. In Viking culture the father would be more harmed if the son stayed home and bandaged his father’s wounds. This analysis is sustained in this context even though the specific form of the gratitude action is not consonant with our understanding of what it means to show gratitude.
In addition to the issue discussed above, we also must make some remarks about
the limitations of gratitude obligations. It may seem that such obligations are absolute
and quite extensive in themselves. Neither of these assumptions is correct for the
account presented here. Gratitude obligations are neither absolute nor unlimited. They
are not inherently overriding. Gratitude is, to use Kant’s distinctions, a perfect duty (for
those who find themselves in such a relationship). However there may be other perfect
duties that an individual may have, the performance of which will conflict with the
gratitude duty. Gratitude obligations may also be viewed as prima facie obligations. As
Walker claims for his argument from gratitude;

this obligation is only, in Ross’s phrase, a prima facie obligation, and I
have said nothing about its weight or stringency, save to remark that it
will vary with the nature and extent of the benefits.... My version of the
argument, then, unlike the Socratic version in the Crito, allows that our
obligation of gratitude to comply with the law may sometimes be
overridden by other, weightier obligations and does not involve us in any
extravagant commitments.24

B. Fulfilling Filial Obligations

Gratitude is due when benefits are given voluntarily, intentionally, benevolently
and in a non-coercive manner by a donor to a recipient. The recipient has an obligation
to cultivate the attitudes of appreciation and goodwill and to act according to the
possession of these attitudes. The actions of grateful conduct are: 1) to not harm the
donor and to not act contrary to the interests of the donor; 2) to help the donor when she
is in need and one can do so at no great loss to oneself; and 3) to accede to the
reasonable requests of the donor.

What does this mean for filial obligations? It means that if the initial criteria for
having a gratitude obligation have been met, then one cannot say that one does not owe her parents anything. Adult children who have been given benefits from their parents, voluntarily, intentionally, benevolently and in a non-coercive manner (and this means most "average" rearing and biological parents) ought to cultivate the attitude of appreciation for these benefits and for their parents and they ought to cultivate the attitude of goodwill toward the parents. Additionally, adult children ought to act according to the three action-types of grateful conduct. This means that adult children have an obligation to:

1) Not harm the parent or act contrary to their interests. This may include such things as not competing or gossiping about parents. We could call such a violation the "Patti Davis Syndrome",25

2) Help the parents when they are in need and the adult child can do so at no great cost to herself. Surely those who have benefitted us so much in the past ought to be able to count on us in times of need. It is usually actions of these types that we think of when we make the intuitive claim that children ought to take care of their parents - meaning children ought to help their parents when their parents are in need.

3) Accede to the reasonable requests of the parents. This action type seems to make some nervous. The example that immediately comes to mind is that of the demanding parent. Some wonder, why is this type of action obligatory? Acceding to reasonable requests from those who have benefitted us in the most profound manner is not at all strange. This does not mean, however, that all requests from all parents are reasonable, or that they ought to be complied with by all adult children. As we said
above when discussing the action types, this type of action, in order to be obligatory to begin with, requires a particularly strong account of the way in which the parents provided the benefits and the benefits that were provided. The presence of sacrifice on the parent’s part also increases the strength of the obligation. Finally, what counts as reasonable is also context dependent. For example, one distinction that we may make is that a request may be one of two kinds: either a request whose nature intrinsically concerns the parent and his or her fundamental well-being or a request whose nature does not intrinsically concern the parent and his or her fundamental well-being, such as a request involving the personal life and behavior of the adult child. An example of the latter may be a parent’s request concerning who and when a child marries, or when and how many children an adult child should have. Requests of the latter type may be considered always unreasonable and therefore not obligatory. However, we ought to recall from Chapter Two that in the traditional Muslim (and classic Chinese) tradition, such requests may not always be considered unreasonable by those who live in such homogeneous communities.

Though there are basic minimum filial obligations, there are also upper limits of such obligations. We ought to remember that the actions which fulfill filial obligations do not have to be reciprocal and there is not just one action that is right to do. Also, we must remember that all of these obligations, because of their nature, can be overridden or outweighed by other competing obligations, including obligations to others for gratitude, to others in general or to oneself.

Suppose, for example, that parents reared a child and provided for him adequately
but perhaps without any special sacrifice on their part. However, someone else, say an aunt or childless neighbor, really took care of the child in other, special and important ways. Perhaps such a person provided the funds to send the child to college, or merely listened to his dreams and hopes, and always encouraged the child. The filial obligations of gratitude in this case may be outweighed by gratitude obligation to this other person.

C. Filial and Competing Obligations

We must remember for all of these cases that the strength of the obligation depends on whether parents met the minimum or whether they went to great lengths. Those who want and feel able to do more for their parents, may do more and they may never consider the issue of whether what they are doing is obligatory. However, there are many who do tremendous amounts for their parents and their children and are finding themselves caught in the middle, sometimes having to choose whose needs ought to be served, when limited resources are available. The psychological and sociological literature presents numerous cases of women, in particular, who have both young children and elderly parents who need help (mostly elderly mothers), and who believe, quite often, that a choice must be made between meeting obligations to the very young and meeting obligations to the very old within the family.26

As in the discussion above concerning competing obligations of gratitude, this is an analogous case of competing obligations. In this situation we have competing special obligations. In cases like these, obligations are thought to flow forward.27 In other words, when filial obligations and obligations to children are both present, the obligations to the younger generations are thought to override those of filial obligations. This is
consonant with our discussion of obligations in Chapter One where we said that a person may have an obligation to do something that, all things considered, she ought not to do (because of competing obligations). This does not mean, therefore, that if one has an obligation to her young child, that the person no longer has obligations to her parents. It means, rather, that at that particular moment when only one of the obligations may be met, that the filial obligation is overridden, until such time as the obligation to the young is met.

We must also specify that the situation envisioned above included the additional assumption that the required actions for both obligations were roughly equivalent in proportionate need. Certainly, needs outweigh requests and so even though obligations are forward flowing, a parent who has basic life-threatening needs may have a greater claim on the adult child for help than the young child has on her parent when the young child requires a minimal life-enhancing "need" or perhaps even a more minimal life-threatening need.

Competing obligations to self matter also. One's own projects and integrity matter. Consider a woman with a career who has children and parents in need. Let us say that she is the only one to help her parents and she has money and does not have to work. But the only way to meet the needs of the parents is to give up her career. If that is the only way to meet survival needs of parents, and she is only one to help, then she may have to do that. But if there are others who can help, or if her monetary contribution can buy help for them, then it is not necessarily true that she ought to give up her career. But, as we said before, it is difficult to say specifically what her
obligation may be without more detail about the situation.

The film, "Like Water for Chocolate"\textsuperscript{29} portrays a particular family in Mexico in which the tradition was that the youngest daughter in a family not to marry and to take care of her mother until her mother’s death. This sacrifice was considered obligatory on the daughter by the mother. The mother in the film treated her youngest daughter in a callous manner and even in an emotionally cruel way. Under my model, surely no filial obligations based on gratitude were due from this youngest daughter. But, what if the mother had treated the girl well? Would gratitude obligations be owed? According to this analysis, the answer is yes. Ought, then, because of the context of this tradition, the girl not to marry and take care of the mother in old age? The answer to this is, I believe, no. The youngest daughter had a right to pursue her own projects, to exercise her personal freedom and to live by her integrity.\textsuperscript{30} The obligation to her self overrides this family tradition. The broader culture of Mexico, moreover, accepted that young women should be able to marry if they wished, that children should take care of their parents and that the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the demands placed on this daughter would generally be considered unreasonable in the broader Mexican culture. The girl may have an obligation to care for her mother, but it does not override all other obligations, like those to self and others. Additionally, any other child in this family may have gratitude obligations as well. The gratitude obligation is never overriding. My analysis says that filial obligations are obligations of gratitude which are not inherently overriding. The Western tradition does hold that the individual does have inherent rights. This daughter may have had some obligation to care for her mother, but
not any obligation that her parent demanded.

As we have seen, gratitude does not tell one what to do in every case, as reciprocity might. This is at once frustrating and understandable. The reason then why we have so much trouble trying to determine what filial obligations are is not because we do not know, but perhaps because we have been looking for too much precision. We must remember what Aristotle cautioned so long ago:

it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits;\textsuperscript{31}

IV. Conclusion

We have concluded our analysis of the philosophical foundation of filial obligations. We have argued that filial obligations are based on gratitude and that adult children have the obligation to cultivate the attitudes of gratitude and to act according to the possession of such attitudes. We were able to specify the types of actions that grateful conduct requires but we argued that a model which yielded definite answers for all circumstances of filial obligations is not possible.

The distinction between obligation-based moral theory and virtue-based moral theory is perhaps best described as that between action-centered morality and agent-centered morality. Virtue theory is also able to account for certain things which we think are important for morality that are not accounted for on an action-centered moral theory. An advantage of using virtue based moral theory is that it works better than obligation based moral theory in certain contexts in which character assessment is important. In the context of the family, for example, we want to be able to say that the child who acts
filially well acts best if it is from disposition to act in such a way towards her parents not from some conception of doing her duty. Filial virtues then seem to be the way in which morality can be best understood the issue of what adult children should do for their parents.

The above shows that virtue theory is unable to give us a complete account of morality for filial concerns. It cannot give us action guides in all morally significant situations. For this reason, an appeal to virtues cannot fully satisfy the moral dimensions of filiality. However, we have also seen that virtue theory does seem to capture the important dispositional and motivational aspects of morality. Virtue theory can give an account of agent-centered actions and we believe that proving this has been important.

The argument that filial obligations are a particular type of gratitude obligation returns us to the discussion we began in Chapter One. This analysis has argued that obligations to parents are not status obligations because the requirements are not predicated upon the role of the child, but rather on presence or absence of certain features of the parent-child relationship. These features include the intentional and voluntary bestowal of benefits to children from their parents, primarily for the sake of benefiting the children. The implications of this analysis for long-term care of elderly parents and for health care policy regarding filial obligations are the subject for future study in this area.
NOTES


8. It should be recalled here, as discussed in Chapter Two, that Aquinas thought that what children owed to parents is based on the virtue of piety (Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, Q.101). The relationship of piety to gratitude, on his account, is as follows:
   Accordingly, since what we owe God, or our father, or a person excelling in dignity, is not the same as what we owe a benefactor from whom we have received some particular favor, it follows that after religion, whereby we pay God due worship, and piety, whereby we worship our parents, and observance, whereby we worship persons excelling in dignity, there is thankfulness or gratitude, whereby we give thanks to our benefactors. And it is distinct from the foregoing virtues, just as each of these is distinct from the one that precedes, as falling short thereof (Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, Q. 106 Art. 1, emphasis added).

   three elements in the paradigmatic case of grateful response. Two of these are forms of actions and will be called grateful conduct and grateful use. The third is the attitudinal element already mentioned—that of feeling gratitude. All three of these are part of the total gift relation, of the socio-moral practice of gifts, to which, I have argued, the recipient consents when accepting the gift (8).
   Camenisch has a view that feelings are part of the grateful response, but are not strictly
obligatory. Additionally, his analysis is not precisely about the same relationship as this one since his definition of a gift is centered on the recipient's consent to the moral relationship, as evidenced by the acceptance of the gift. As discussed in Chapters One and Three, filial obligations and gratitude obligations as defined here are nonvoluntary special obligations. The issue of "consent" does not meaningfully apply here because children do not consent to the benefits given them by parents. Gratitude is though due in these nonvoluntary situations.


13. Camenisch, 10.

14. Camenisch, 8-9. Camenisch's point here highlights again an important and crucial difference between reciprocity and gratitude obligations; that is, that for reciprocity the nature of the gift indeed does determine the content of the gratitude obligation.


16. Walker, 204.

17. Walker, 205.


19. This does not of course mean that the recipient is forbidden to help in such circumstances, but that if she did help at a great cost to herself, such an action would be supererogatory.


23. I am indebted to H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. for this example mentioned by him in personal communication and developed here by me.


25. Patti Davis is the daughter of the former President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan. Her virtually nonexistent literary career took off with a supposed work of fiction that closely
resembled her life and revealed much that was embarrassing to her parents.


29. Based on the book in the Spanish by L. Esquivel, "Como Agua Por Chocolate."

30. Williams, 108-118.

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