All Happy Families Are *Not* Alike: A Feminist Aristotelian Perspective on the Good Family

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Abstract

In this thesis, the claim that a flourishing family life should be characterised as a social practice, according to Alasdair MacIntyre's definition of a practice, is defended. Furthermore, it is argued that the social practice of making and sustaining family life pursues certain goods, the achievement of which are constitutive of the family's flourishing. The argument proceeds through the following stages. In the first part I focus on the Aristotelian premises of the argument and set out MacIntyre's theoretical framework. I then apply this framework of the relationship between practices and institutions and internal and external goods to the family. In the second part I explore three important contemporary moral theories and how they address what a flourishing family life involves. In doing so, I look at how the Aristotelian approach adopted in this thesis compares to these approaches. The three approaches explored are contemporary liberalism (in particular liberal perfectionism), liberal feminism and feminist care ethics. At the end of this part of the thesis I argue that a synthesis of the Aristotelian framework and the particular insights of care ethics will provide a richer view of what a flourishing family life involves. In the final part of the thesis I provide an outline of some of the goods internal to the practice of life and the different activities and relationships which are constitutive of these goods. I then go on to suggest how families often fail to flourish as a result of the pursuit of external goods as ends in themselves or due to a lack of external goods. The conclusion of this thesis and its original contribution to knowledge is twofold: firstly, that MacIntyre's contemporary Aristotelianism in combination with the insights of care ethics provides the tools with which we can identify the goods that contribute to and constitute familial flourishing. Secondly, that in order to identify the barriers to flourishing that families encounter, we must first understand what the goods internal and external to the practice are. We must then ensure that the institutions designed to sustain the family subordinate the goods external to family life to the internal goods, which only family members themselves can achieve through co-operative activity with each other.

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Contents

Introduction

1. The theoretical background

This work is concerned with what constitutes a flourishing family life. In what follows I defend the thesis that, in order to understand what a flourishing family life involves, the family should be characterised as a social practice, according to Alasdair MacIntyre's definition of a practice. Furthermore, through this practice family members pursue their common good. The thesis uses a philosophical framework developed by MacIntyre in the tradition of Aristotelian thinking, which claims that human beings participate in a range of socially established, cooperative human activities called practices. These social practices are sustained through institutions that are designed to supply external goods for the instrumental use of the practice. My goal is to apply this framework to the family and to ascertain, drawing on a range of philosophical and empirical sources, what the goods internal to family life are and how they contribute to its overall flourishing. From this argument about what familial flourishing involves, it will be possible to suggest what some of the barriers to familial flourishing are.

Any working definition of the family will be too narrow or too broad for the purposes of this thesis. What I aim to capture is a shared understanding of family in which the roles of parents and children, of siblings, aunts, uncles, in-laws, and grandparents are so defined that there is a shared practice of family life, so that it is possible to speak of particular families at particular times as stable or unstable, as functioning well or functioning badly, as scenes of conflict and/or of reconciliation. What it is for a family to be stable or unstable, to function well or badly, to be a place of fruitful or frustrating conflict, has been and is of course understood differently by different observers and rival theorists, so it would be a mistake to include any one such understanding in an initial definition. Indeed, who count as family members and what the significance of biological and legal family ties are, is fundamentally contested throughout the literature. Many theorists of the family have questioned defining the family because of the range of diverse forms in which it comes. The family is not easily defined as it varies from one culture to another and it succeeds or fails for different reasons. Furthermore, the increase in reproductive technologies and the separation between reproductive and caretaking contributions forces us to reassess assumptions about parenting claims and therefore the 'ideal' form

of the family (see Cutas and Chan 2012). Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift (2009) argue that there are specific 'relationship goods' that can only be realised within familial relationships, such as the parent-child relationship, which contribute to human flourishing. They argue that these relationship goods cannot be realised in state-run institutions which may conform more to egalitarian principles, but deny adults and children 'those aspects of well-being that derive from participation in familial, parent-child relationships' (2009, 51). On the other hand, Anca Ghaeus (2012) argues that family relationships have no special or unique value, because other intimate relationships outside of the family embody love and it is love which makes family relationships valuable. Her conclusion is that familial relationships between adults should be afforded no special social or moral protections except where a high degree of commitment might be required, as in the case of co-parents. Current philosophical debates about the family therefore show that different models of the family are emerging, which question societal assumptions about our moral obligations to family members and how far we should advance the wellbeing of our family members at the expense of others in society. Due to the diversity of family types where one size does not fit all, it seems more practical to talk about the family in terms of what it does, or should do, rather than in terms of what it looks like or by privileging one type of family structure over another.

What I hope I have constructed in my thesis is a compelling argument in favour of one particular way of understanding these matters. I will argue that the practice of family life is the activity of an association of people who work together to pursue distinct goods that cannot be achieved in the same way by other associations. These functions include the moral education and nurturance of children, care and support for elderly and disabled members, conjugal and sexual relations, and maintaining intergenerational bonds. The realisation of these functions by family members results in the achievement of internal goods and should therefore not be understood as sociologically functionalist; in other words, in this model the family is not carrying out functions on behalf of society but rather enables family members to function well as family members and as human beings, thus achieving their good. A family may achieve each of the internal goods simultaneously or they may be reordered and pursued at different points in the life course of the family. Thus the family may be aiming at the goods of the education and nurturance of children, when family members have dependent children in their care, but this does not mean that other goods, such as the goods of intergenerational bonds should be sacrificed. However,

they may be ordered in different ways at different stages in the life of the family according to what will make the family flourish at that time.

In contrast to Ghaeus' claims, I will argue that the family *is* valuable and that it is a form of association in which love and care is expressed in distinct ways. Using MacIntyre's conception of practices, I will argue that the practice of family life is an activity that unites individuals towards a common end. The practice of family life can therefore be defined as the engagement by a group of people, united through custom, biology or legal ties, in common activity that is aimed at certain kinds of goods. These goods are usually only fully realisable when people live together, dedicate themselves to each other, raise children together and care for those for whom they find themselves responsible as a result of biology, law or custom. Familial roles can as such be unconventional, flexible and non-biological; for example, one's biological aunt or grandparent may sometimes take on the role of one's parent and many adults adopt or foster children. The tendency of people to live together in small groups in order to support each other at their most vulnerable (i.e. as children, in sickness, in disability and in old age) suggests that the family is natural because it meets human needs and demonstrates that human nature is social. This does not mean that family needs to be biologically constituted in order to be natural but that it is in our nature to form small-scale, long-lasting intimate bonds which are the basis of family life.

It should be made clear that in this thesis I recognise that there are a range of family types from the nuclear to the extended, from the conventional to the single-parent or post-divorce, second family. This understanding of the family does not provide an ideal type of family structure because family structures are constantly changing as time passes. Furthermore, it is the adaptability of family life to human needs which has allowed it to survive as a practice for so many generations. The thesis will assume therefore that all family types have the potential to flourish; though some will encounter more barriers to flourishing, in other words, more challenges, than others. The purpose of the thesis is to understand what the functions and goods of family life are, not what form family life should take. An account which focuses on the form of the family or which assumes that the nuclear family is best, fails to capture the essence of what a family actually is because it ignores the many different family types that perform the functions of family life well.

The following chapters will argue that MacIntyre's Aristotelianism offers a practical framework for understanding what is uniquely valuable about family life, what the features of a good family are and how the good of family life can be corrupted. Lately, a great deal has been written about what, if anything, makes family life worthwhile and what a good family looks like. Liberals such as David Archard have defended the claim that 'good families can exhibit a plurality of forms' (Archard 2010, vii) but that a good family is one which fulfils a certain social function; that of the care, guidance and protection of children. Others have questioned whether families are uniquely valuable at all and concludes that commitment between co-parents may be necessary for advancing the wellbeing of children but that it is relationships based on love, not families per se, which are uniquely valuable (Gheaus 2012). On the other hand, Swift and Brighouse argue that the family, and in particular the parent-child relationship, is uniquely valuable, and thus needs protecting with rights. They do so by weighing up what is good for parents against what is good for children and then using the conclusions to set limits on the fundamental rights of parents (Brighouse and Swift 2006).

Feminist activists and theorists have long debated what a good family looks like in terms of how women are treated, and have critically examined the roles that women have traditionally inhabited. Carole Pateman notes the long history of debates around equality and difference within the feminist movement and feminist scholarship relating to women and the family (Pateman 2011). She argues that, while many in the feminist movement wanted women to have equality with men, their claims were not necessarily in direct opposition to *difference* arguments, which aimed for the recognition of women's distinctive characteristics and activities in society. As such, feminists were not simply aiming for equality with men but also for recognition of women's traditional contribution to society through mothering and home-making. This suggests that at least some feminist scholars and activists thought that the family, traditionally a woman's domain, was valuable and that a good family would be one in which women's economic dependence on men was lessened, while at the same time the social and economic value of what women did in the home was recognised and distributed more equally between the sexes.

Others, working outside of the liberal tradition, have also discussed the value of family life and what family life looks like at its best. Feminist care ethics emphasises that a good family is one which is embedded in a society that recognises human dependence and

frailty. While some ethics of care theorists have claimed that women have a unique moral voice, which is not accommodated by contemporary liberal rationality (Gilligan 1993), others have focussed more on the parent-child relationship as a moral paradigm for social relations (Held 2005). Carol Gilligan's approach emphasises difference between men and women as a result of the kind of worlds men and women tend to live in. Since women tend to participate in more intimate, particularistic relationships through caregiving, they develop empathy and recognise dependency. Men on the other hand, Gilligan argues, exercise morality according to rational precepts which apply universally. The value of family life is that it develops empathy and understanding of the particular Other, as opposed to the generalised Other of liberal thinking to whom we apply universal rules. Furthermore, from a care ethics perspective, family life is a response to the dependence and vulnerability of human beings. All human beings are born completely helpless and require the care and nurture of adult human beings. What is widely acknowledged across different perspectives is that the best place for these dependent and vulnerable infants to grow and develop, into more independent adults, is within a family. The form that the family can or should take and the extent to which the family is separated from public life is, however, widely contested from one theoretical tradition to the next.

Also working outside of the liberal tradition is the Aristotelian Thomist philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre. Like the care ethics feminists, MacIntyre emphasises the dependence and vulnerability of human beings. While his main focus is not on the family itself but rather on communities, what he does say about the family is illuminating. For MacIntyre, 'Families at their best are forms of association in which children are first nurtured, and then educated for and initiated into the activities of an adult world in which their parents' participatory activities provide them both with resources and models' (MacIntyre 1999, 133). MacIntyre thus argues that the family cannot flourish if its social environment does not also flourish, and as the social environments of families vary from one context to another, so does the mode of flourishing. MacIntyre would, therefore, appear to agree with David Archard that good families take many forms. As such they both refute Tolstoy's claim that 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy 2003 chap. 1). Yet there are significant differences between their approaches which will be explored in this thesis.

What do we mean, then, when we speak of a happy or flourishing family? Each of the approaches mentioned in outline above may or may not reach similar conclusions, but they would certainly approach the answer in different ways. Methodologically, the argument of this thesis begins with Alasdair MacIntyre's Aristotelianism and his practices and institutions framework. This approach takes an Aristotelian view of human nature that human beings are fundamentally social and political animals who pursue goods and have the capacity for practical reasoning which allows them to rank order those goods. For MacIntyre, many goods constitutive of a good life are pursued through practices in cooperation with others. However, Aristotelianism, as a tradition of enquiry, may well seem irrelevant to how we speak in contemporary situations. Indeed, Morgan (2008) has argued that if MacIntyre is correct about the modern self as being individualistic and self-interested with no interest in common goods, then we are unable to explain why MacIntyre's work has resonated with so many. Furthermore, if MacIntyre's diagnosis is correct, one might question the relevance of an Aristotelian account of social forms and moral standpoints for the problems we face here and now. MacIntyre argues that the language of morality in the modern world, particularly since the Enlightenment when the Aristotelian tradition was widely rejected, is in grave disorder (MacIntyre 1985, 2). On the other hand, he also claims that we are all proto-Aristotelians because we all ask questions such as 'How are we to work together?' (MacIntyre 2008, 266) and 'what is my good?' which leads to questions such as 'what is *the* good for humans beings?' (MacIntyre 1998, 145–6). His solution to this apparent contradiction between our lack of a coherent moral language and our ability to ask questions about the good, is that the modern self is a divided self because she has not been allowed to develop, or has not allowed herself to develop, her life in an Aristotelian form despite having that potentiality (1998, 147). For this development to take place, we need practices that are in good order; supported by institutions which are subordinate to those practices.

The problem MacIntyre identifies with modernity, following Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), is that moral philosophy is no longer able to move from statements of facts about how the world is, to statements about how one ought to act. MacIntyre's answer is a practical philosophy wherein the precepts of rational ethics are the means for the transition of 'untutored human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be' to 'human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*' (MacIntyre 1985, 53). The final end (*telos*) is rational happiness or *eudaimonia;* in other words it is the fulfilment of human potentiality, or a life well lived.

The precepts of rational ethics 'enjoin the various virtues and prohibit the vices which are their counterparts instruct[ing] us how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize our true nature and to reach our true end' (MacIntyre 1985, 52). The virtues, MacIntyre argues, are given their content by what the good life for human beings, as the *telos* of human action, is understood as. Without the virtues, the goods internal to the practice of making and sustaining family life are barred to us. The virtues enable us to achieve those goods. Furthermore, the goods internal to a practice 'are qualitatively distinct from, and not substitutable for, one another' (Keat 2008, 245). As such these goods have their own intrinsic value for human beings and one good cannot be traded for another. The virtues play a key role in MacIntyre's account of human practices and institutions. It is through participation in practices that one cultivates and exhibits the virtues. Thus MacIntyre's approach is to restate the Aristotelian tradition 'in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments' (MacIntyre 1985, 259). MacIntyre's project makes the bold claim that the Aristotelian tradition of thought is the only tradition which makes human action intelligible. All other traditions, he claims, are simulacra of moral thinking which have inherited some of the vocabulary in a fragmented way, lacking 'those contexts from which their significance derived' (MacIntyre 1985, 2).

In an attempt to make family life intelligible as a universal human activity, this thesis has as its premise that the family is a practice in MacIntyre's sense and must be seen as part of the narrative unity of a human life – not a separated or partitioned arena. We are born in a state of untutored human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be. Our socialisation into the practice of family life, and our particular roles in that family, are where we first begin to learn not only how to stand back from our desires and reason about the good, but also how to sustain complex networks of human relationships of caregiving and dependence that are constitutive of a good life. What we begin to learn in the family as children, and what we continue to learn from participation in family life as adults, is how to form and sustain relationships which pursue common goods, rather than relationships which are or may appear to be merely useful to our own individual ends. We learn how to make someone else's good part of our own good.

The approach used in this thesis also draws on a conception of the good life of human beings rooted in a view of human nature which sees us as dependent practical reasoners. This view, which is most fully developed in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational*

Animals, proposes that Aristotle was right insofar as he saw that human beings have a function, or essential nature, which they have to fulfil in order to achieve their *telos,* or final end. MacIntyre's reading, however, accepts that human beings fulfil their essential nature in a plurality of ways through participation in a range of human practices (MacIntyre 1985, 187–8). According to Aristotle, the human *telos* is *eudaimonia,* understood here as flourishing. Each human being has the potential to achieve this ultimate good through the cultivation of virtue and exercise of rational powers, primarily through participation in the political life of the *polis*. However, they can be frustrated in various ways and need the right kind of education and training. That training has to be practical rather than simply abstract or theoretical. One cannot learn how to be good by studying the theory of goodness or sitting in a classroom listening to a lecturer; one has to receive an initial training which will make one educable as someone who can cultivate the virtues. For Aristotle, 'a person shows what he thinks is a good life, at least a good one for himself, by the kind of life he actually leads rather than by giving assent to abstract arguments and conclusions' (Cooper 1986, 62). MacIntyre's conception of practices demonstrates that we learn virtues through practical activity, from others to whom we are apprenticed.

MacIntyre's philosophy avoids the biological essentialism about human nature that we find in Aristotle, without descending into relativism. From a MacIntyrean perspective, practices have goods internal to them which are achieved through the activity of the practitioners. This does not imply essentialism about human nature because it depends on people choosing and acting to pursue those goods. In order to achieve the goods of the practice, practitioners must engage in certain kinds of activities but these activities have been developed over time by persons engaged in these practices. The practices have histories and sociologies and are therefore not biologically determined.

While MacIntyre recognises in *Dependent Rational Animals* (*DRA*) that he was mistaken in *After Virtue* to attempt an account of the virtues within social practices independent of Aristotle's metaphysical biology, he is still not a hardcore essentialist. His argument, for now developing an ethics which is not independent of biology, has two reasons:

> The first is that no account of the goods, rules and virtues that are definitive of our
> moral life can be adequate that does not explain – or at least point us towards an
> explanation – how that form of life is possible for beings who are biologically

constituted as we are, by providing us with an account of our development towards and into that form of life. That development has as its starting point our initial animal condition. Secondly, a failure to understand that condition and the light thrown upon it by a comparison between humans and members of other intelligent animal species will obscure crucial features of that development (MacIntyre 1999, p. *x*).

Thus in *DRA* MacIntyre develops his account of the virtues through recognition of the nature of the vulnerability and disability of human beings due to their initial animal condition. This would go some way towards explaining why family life is so widespread, developing as a result of biological human needs, and yet can be found in so many different forms according the histories and social orders in which they developed.

Another way in which Aristotle falters, is in the extent to which we are different from other animals. While he recognises that human beings are indeed animals, he argues that only human beings have the capacity for *phronesis* (practical reasoning)[1]. MacIntyre on the other hand argues that some non-human animals also have a capacity for practical reason (MacIntyre 1999). As MacIntyre demonstrates with reference to dolphins, many non-human animals are social and engage in practices such as hunting, play and family life. Thus the functional capacity for engaging in social practices is not only prelinguistic but also pre-institutional. However, the way human animals participate in practices is distinct from – while sharing many common features with – other intelligent animals. Seeming to support MacIntyre's claims, some evolutionary socio-biologists have found, in studies of the young of great apes compared with human children, that while great apes are able to recognise others as animate, goal-directed, intentional agents, humans have 'a species-unique motivation to share emotions, experience, and activities with other persons' (Tomasello et al. 2005, 675). This, they argue, results in activities of joint intention and attention, cultural learning, the creation and use of linguistic symbols and the construction of shared norms and institutions. They propose that 'human beings, and only human beings, are biologically adapted for participating in collaborative activities involving shared goals and socially coordinated action plans (joint intentions)' (2005, 676). Since humans are not only social but also political, we have constructed institutions, language and rules in order to sustain our practices.

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[1] As MacIntyre points out (1999, p. 5-6) Aristotle did seem to ascribe practical rationality to some nonhuman animals 'that clearly have a capacity for forethought about their own lives' (*NE* 1141a 27-28). However, what is not explored by Aristotle is 'how the *phronesis* of some types of nonhuman animal is related to specifically and distinctively human rationality' (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 6).

A second area in which MacIntyre diverges from Aristotle is with regard to dependency and human vulnerability. For Aristotle, dependency and vulnerability are feminine weaknesses whereas for MacIntyre dependency is a fact of human animal lives. Aristotle does not accept that the best kind of human being can experience dependency. Rather, dependency in adulthood is a sign of flourishing being frustrated. While he emphasises the importance of virtuous friendship and friendliness between the citizens of the *polis* (city-state) he does not allow for the good friend, or the good citizen, to need others in a dependent capacity. MacIntyre thus addresses whether or not an Aristotelian ethics can accommodate dependency within human flourishing and not see it only as a barrier to flourishing. This thesis will argue that a contemporary Aristotelian virtue ethics needs to be synthesised with the insights of feminist care ethics in order to fully accommodate human dependency into a flourishing life (including those practices which support dependent humans), focussing in particular on the practice of family life.

This thesis implies, but does not separately set out, a defence of MacIntyre's theory against familiar lines of criticism. What I aim to show instead is how, in the study of particular institutions and practices, MacIntyre's central concepts find illuminating application, as Ron Beadle had done in his studies of the circus (Beadle and Könyöt, 2006; Beadle 2013) and Angus Robson had done in his study of Scottish banking (Forthcoming). My thesis follows in their steps and, insofar as it provides a fruitful way of understanding contemporary family life, it is in itself a further rejoinder to MacIntyre's theoretical critics. Objections that his account is too problematically conservative, relativist and traditionalist for thinking about contemporary family life, in a way that is compatible with certain feminist goals, are addressed throughout, as and when they arise.

Chapter 1 will explore in more depth why MacIntyre's Aristotelian philosophy is relevant to a thesis on family life. Drawing on the development of the Aristotelian tradition, I argue that families can be considered good insofar as they begin to enable family members to actualise their human potential through caring relationships. In order to do this, families should enable human beings to fulfil their functions as family members and as human beings. As family members, they pursue goods internal to the practice of family life which can only be realised through that practice. As human beings, the pursuit and achievement of those goods contributes to their overall human flourishing by cultivating virtues and practical reasoning and developing networks of caregiving and receiving. If

families stop or hinder human beings from achieving their *telos* then they can be evaluated as dysfunctional families or, at least, as families that need help. If families as such always hinder human flourishing then there may be grounds for advocating the abolition of the family as we know it and, instead, propose some alternative. If only some families hinder the flourishing of particular human beings in a particular society, then there may be grounds for institutions outside of the family, within that society, to intervene in family life either directly or indirectly. These issues will be addressed throughout.

This thesis will not, however, provide a sustained consideration of cultural differences regarding the nature, scope, roles and functions of the family. The aim of this work is to I provide the outlines of a practice, which might then prepare the way for empirical research on the family. I will therefore consider the practice of family life (as opposed to a specific cultural form of the family), in order to develop a potential framework which could be applied to families in different cultural contexts. Indeed, MacIntyre argues that practices to some extent develop evaluative standards independent of 'the particular cultural and social order which we happen to inhabit and whose language we happen to speak' (MacIntyre 2006a, 46). For MacIntyre, the culture which we inhabit and the language we happen to speak do not provide the only standards by which we can judge what is good. MacIntyre claims that 'The criteria for the identity of practices are in important respects transcultural' and that 'It is from *within* the practice... that shared standards are discovered, standards which enable transcultural judgments of sameness and difference to be made' (2006a, 47). While MacIntyre does not ignore the influence of culture – 'This does not mean that how a practice develops within a particular social and cultural order is not characteristically affected by other features of that order' (2006a, 48) – he does claim that the practice develops its own 'institutionalized tradition' which practitioners are inducted into and which has its own history somewhat independent of the social order. I will use an example of a different practice to illustrate the point. The practice of singing is different in Mongolia to South Africa, the UK and Switzerland. Singing can have different cultural functions and purposes, from religious ceremonies to folk singing to pure popular entertainment. It has also developed in very different styles from opera to throat singing to yodelling and from singing with accompaniment to singing *a cappella*. Each style and purpose for singing has developed within particular cultures and has its own history. Nonetheless, everyone recognises it as singing and that it has a

limited range of functions and purposes for its practitioners which are understood across cultural boundaries.

Therefore, while it is both interesting and important to consider the cultural differences between families of different social orders, this will not be the focus of my thesis.[2] I will be instead concerned with the general functions and roles of the practice of family life, drawing occasionally on culturally specific examples of the Western, modern family (because that is the culture which I inhabit), whilst also recognising that the framework developed here could have application in other cultural contexts. This understanding of practices as transcultural is also why MacInytre is not a communitarian. As Knight points out, MacIntyre argues for criterion for judgements of truth which are independent of a communal consensus (Knight, 2008c). The practice of philosophy for example, has differences according to the cultural context in which it is practiced but it is nonetheless true that there are standards and rules of philosophical enquiry which must be followed in order for the activity to be classed as philosophy.

2. The functional family

At this stage in the argument, it is relevant to note that most people in contemporary situations do not subscribe to MacIntyre's Aristotelian practical philosophy and conception of the good life for human beings. Western states, for instance, are, broadly speaking, liberal capitalist democracies and, despite the range of ideologies subscribed to by different governments and political parties, most, explicitly or implicitly, accept the principles of contemporary liberalism that the state should be neutral between different conceptions of the good. Furthermore, within this context of liberal democracy, particular families are influenced by their own cultural traditions, religious belief systems and world views, some of which conflict with one another, and with liberalism itself, exerting different moral, cultural, political, social and religious claims on individuals. However, each claim is operating within the context of a liberal state which promotes a mixture of tolerance, pluralism, rights, duties, liberty and differing conceptions of justice in order to enable individuals to pursue their own conception of the good life. On such a liberal view, in order to assess whether or not a family is flourishing, a fairly thin and limited

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[2] Such a comparison would make an interesting follow up piece of empirically-based research to this theoretical research.

conception of the good family must be employed which does not infringe too much on the individual's conception of the good life. Thus families should raise children according to their own conception of the good but within the confines of certain liberal principles. Nevertheless, there are attempts to say more within this context.

The first attempt worth noting, because it tries to say more in a liberal context, is the US Department of Health's 'Research on Successful Families' (Krysan, Moore, and Zill 1990) the goal of which was 'to discover the conditions and behaviour patterns that make for family success'. The second is the report by the UK's Family Commission 'Starting a Family Revolution: Putting Families in Charge' (The Family Commission 2010) which employed surveys, focus groups, and regional study visits to bring together the views of 10,000 families in the UK.

The report by the Family Commission in the UK argues that, due to the domination of public discourse by images of toxic families that fail their children, the state and its laws have forgotten that families are 'a huge resource' (2010, 5). Instead, they are often seen as part of the problem; for example, they are often characterised as 'possibly dangerous, certainly less competent than the child protection experts' (2010, 5). The report also states that:

> Over the last two decades family structures have changed and diversified. Marriage looks very different today. Work has invaded our private lives, so that trying to carve out the time our children need has become a real struggle. Family members are scattered around the country and sometimes the world (2010, 5).

Despite these dramatic changes the survey conducted by the commission found that for the majority of families 'the most important aspects of family life are the unconditional love, the fun and the support we give each other' (2010, 6).

In the US report, referred to above, researchers for the Department of Health and Human Services put together

> a body of research on families that are enduring, cohesive, affectionate, and mutually-appreciative, and in which family members communicate with one another frequently and fruitfully. They are families that raise children who go on to form successful families themselves. They are not necessarily families that are trouble-free. Some have experienced health problems, financial difficulties, and other problems. But they are adaptable and able to deal with crises in a constructive manner (Krysan, Moore, and Zill 1990, 2).

The purpose of both pieces of research, carried out two decades apart, was to show how families are successfully sustained, focussing on the positive attributes of family life rather than where families go wrong. The emphasis of the research, then, is on how families can succeed rather than how they fail; in other words, what constitutes a successful or flourishing family life. One of their aims therefore was to counteract the emphasis on family failure and dysfunction within social policy.

As the US report points out, just as health is not reducible to the absence of disease, equally, a good family is not simply one that lacks major problems. The report states it is important to research strong healthy families as well as dysfunctional problem families for practical reasons: to prevent problems occurring in the first place, to provide a broader range of social indicators for family functioning, and, finally, to promote positive actions through public information. Prevention, measurement and education are the practical motivations; however, the study argues that the ethical motivation is that societies need healthy families because we rely on them to perform essential functions ranging from providing for the economic needs of dependents, to rearing and nurturing, to caring for the frail and disabled. The study, therefore, finds that the family is a worthwhile institution because it fulfils certain social functions, and it also gives reasons why contemporary Western societies do, and should, want to preserve the family as a social institution. Furthermore, it proposes what characteristics are needed to succeed in fulfilling those functions: 'families that are enduring, cohesive, affectionate, and mutually-appreciative, and in which family members communicate with one another frequently and fruitfully' as stated above. The study claims to be trying to 'discover the conditions and behaviour patterns that make for family success' (Krysan, Moore, and Zill 1990, 2) yet the researchers already seem to have a preconceived idea of what these might be. The report does not choose an outcome to measure and then discover the characteristics which achieve the outcome. This is because we cannot measure the success of a family on outcomes alone.

The length of time a family stays together, the wealth a family accumulates, the educational outcomes of its children or the kind of citizen the family produces are not enough on their own to determine whether or not a family is a good family. Family life is not merely a preparation for the rest of life; it is an intrinsic component of a good life for many people and many of us will be a part of some family from birth to death. Implicit in

their claims is that how a family functions on a day to day basis and what activities it pursues are just as essential for understanding whether or not a family is successful, as outcomes are. Despite the researchers involved in the report coming from different disciplines and perspectives, they were able to produce a list 'of structural and behavioural attributes which characterize successful families' (Krysan et al. 1990, 3).

On the other hand, determining the social functions of the family, rather than focusing purely on outcomes, is not a new approach. One of the earliest sociological theorists of the family, Talcott Parsons, who coined the term 'nuclear family', also put forward a functional argument which claims that changes in modern society led to a refining of the role and functions of the family (1956; 1949; 1964). Parsons does not see the nuclear family as ahistorical but rather as an adaptation to change. In other words, according to Parsons, 'the modern family is particularly well suited to an industrial economy in that it facilitates labour mobility, socialises children and provides a source of emotional support for adults in an otherwise competitive, rootless and impersonal society' (Elliot 1986, 35). This functional argument is also highly structural. Parsons sees the family as a constituent element of the societal system and looks at the functions of that institution within the social structure. He also makes large structural generalisations about changes in society and in the family. He claims that 'the modern family is a structurally isolated nuclear unit' (Elliot 1986, 37) and that kinship groups have almost completely disintegrated in response to the needs of an advanced industrial economy. This narrowing of the social functions of the family is not something to be lamented according to Parsons. Whereas previously the family had performed social functions of a religious, political, educational or economic nature directly on behalf of society, for Parsons, the modern family's specific functions were now of the socialisation of children and psychological support of adults, while other institutions took over broader social functions. According to Parsons, these narrower functions were more suited to helping individuals cope with the social and psychological demands of modern life outside of the nuclear family.

Parsons' thesis is a powerful one but is nonetheless widely rejected by social theorists today. Criticisms range from problems with his claim that the nuclear family is a distinctively modern phenomenon whereas the pre-modern family was always a large-scale kinship group, to problems with his conceptualisation of the modern family, to problems with his gender politics and his value-laden judgements about society. It seems

that one of the main problems with Parsons' thesis is the idea that there is such a thing as 'the Family' in the homogenous sense and that the modern nuclear family has developed as a perfect adaptation to modern industrial demands. This generalisation ignores the diversity and plurality of family forms in modernity. Furthermore, his emphasis on the gendered division of labour as providing what children need and the idea of the nuclear family as a haven from a competitive and impersonal society, are far more problematic than he claims, as we shall see. Finally, his functional argument focuses on how the family functions for society's needs in a society which only seems to value competitiveness and profit. While he does discuss the needs of children and adults, it is only their needs within such a society which are considered, rather than how the family enables good *human* functioning. What I mean by human functioning, as opposed to societal functioning, is elaborated below.

The idea of the family fulfilling certain functions for the benefit of society and its members, as a sort of cog in the machinery of social life, is the approach taken both by sociological functionalism and to some extent by the two pieces of social research outlined above; though the latter's use of function is more theoretically innocent and thus conceptually ambiguous. The view of a functioning family proposed in this thesis differs in that, I will argue, a good family is one which enables human functioning and, as such, contributes to human flourishing. This claim is based on Aristotle's conception of functioning derived from his metaphysical biology – that each thing, from a tree to an animal, has a function which is closely connected to the *telos,* or final end, of that thing. And, as we have already ascertained, for human beings, that final end is *eudaimonia* (flourishing). According to MacIntyre, participation in practices, where our own good can only be realised by achieving common goods through shared practical reasoning, is constitutive of a flourishing human life. A practice, such as the family, is in good order only when it enables the practitioners to function well through reasoning with one another. This good functioning is partially dependent on the institutions that help to sustain the practice also being in good order and directed towards the good of the practice. One function of practitioners in family life might be to take care of dependent family members. In doing so the family member gives care without calculating what he will gain in return and contributes to the common good of the family. This contribution to common goods is an end in itself which is constitutive of the family member's own good (rather than being simply a means to that end). The family functions well when it achieves

its goods. What this really means is that the family members *qua* practitioners achieve their common goods through their specific activity. It does not involve some abstract concept of 'the family' working as a structural force upon the lives of its members and within the wider social structure, as Parsons' functionalism implies. As such, the Aristotelian conception of functioning is morally purposive. The functions of a human being or a social practice are to actualise some good; they do not come about spontaneously, independent of any shared human intention. In MacIntyre's Aristotelianism, there is no 'functionality to society that is independent of actors' purposes' (Knight 2013, 83).

3. The structure of the thesis

Thus far I have set out the thesis question as well as provide some context for why this is an important question and how I intend to approach it. This section describes in more detail the structure of the thesis and how the argument in response to the question will be made. The first part of the thesis focuses on the Aristotelian premises of the argument and sets out the theoretical framework. Chapter 1 gives an account of what a broadly Aristotelian position entails. In doing so the chapter attempts to summarise some of the key ideas and concepts used in Aristotelian thought such as the human good, virtue and flourishing. I argue that an Aristotelian position requires us to think about what is good for human beings in this or that context, which will be constitutive of their wellbeing overall. The chapter then goes on to expound MacIntyre's claims about practices and institutions and how they contribute to, and sometimes inhibit, human flourishing.

The second chapter of the thesis takes the theoretical framework offered by MacIntyre and applies it to the family. In this chapter I argue that making and sustaining family life is a socially established, co-operative human practice which not only attends to our basic needs but also plays an important role in developing our moral and intellectual capacities so that we are able to reason for ourselves about the good and participate in the political life of our particular society. I also critically examine the institutions of the family including marriage, state welfare agencies and private profit-making institutions of care. In doing so, I demonstrate how these institutions can both sustain and corrupt the practice of family life.

Using an Aristotelian approach is not common in studies of the family. In order to demonstrate the contribution a MacIntyrean Aristotelianism can make requires a review of the dominant approaches. The next part of the thesis thus explores three examples of modern moral theory which attempt to address the issue of what makes a good family, as well as how these theories deal with the role of institutions in family life.

The third chapter examines a prime example of a liberal theory of justice and what its proponent, John Rawls, says about the family. Liberal accounts of the family characteristically take a successful family to be one in which individual family members achieve what liberals take to be desirable: being enabled to pursue one's own conception of the good without causing harm to others and to work co-operatively with others in society to achieve one's own ends. A family should provide a minimally decent life for children and is the primary institution set up by society to carry out that function. How families do so is up to them, within certain limits. Many liberal theorists generally seem to assume that the internal lives of families will be free and flourishing, if only minimally constrained, but avoid giving an account of what that flourishing entails. The focus remains on the individual and what the family enables or disables an individual to do in a free, rights-based society. For Rawls, no distinction is made between human practices and the institutions which sustain them. Rather Rawls begins by talking about a practice and later switches to talking about institutions with no conceptual distinction made. For Rawls, the family is a social institution which is somewhat outside of the political sphere and should therefore only be subject to the principles of justice in a limited way. However, some perfectionist liberals are beginning to discuss the relationships of the family as constitutive of a good life, in which goods are realised that are more intrinsically valuable than those goods with which social justice is concerned to distribute.

The fifth and sixth chapters of the thesis will explore modern feminist approaches to the family; specifically, modern liberal feminism and feminist care ethics. While I recognise that there are a range of other feminist perspectives on the family, it is not within the scope of this thesis to review all of the feminist literatures on the family but to focus on two related but often contradictory perspectives. Liberal feminism rejects the male-orientated approach of most mainstream liberalism. Moreover, this form of feminism has, arguably, re-shaped family and working life for contemporary men and children, as well as for women. These accounts characteristically identify ways in which types of

family structure may be inimical to the flourishing of women. In doing so, they pose the question of how women would fare in families that were governed by principles of justice in the same way as other social institutions, or if the family were to be completely abolished and replaced with something else. Liberal feminists have often criticised the institution of marriage both for its exclusion of same sex union and for the unequal power relations between the sexes which it has historically perpetuated. Furthermore, liberal feminist accounts of the family provide important critical analyses of the unjust distribution of external goods and barriers to flourishing that families often generate between the sexes.

Feminist care ethics, on the other hand, is a newer branch of feminist theorising which goes further in rejecting some of the central claims of liberal theory, arguing that, in liberal theory's quest for justice and individual rights, it has ignored the need for care and the recognition of vulnerability and dependence. How, therefore, can liberal theory truly understand the family, which is a site of caregiving and receiving? Care ethics thus begins to give an account of good caring relationships which are crucial to the sustaining of family life and particular relationships. In other words, families cannot function well without good care. It has also said a great deal about institutions of care which support the family looking at the extent to which they empower or disempower families, caregivers and the disabled. However, the paradigm moral relationship for care ethics theorists is that of an asymmetrical parent-child relationship. Further criticism is directed at its focus on mothering, almost mythologizing the mother, and marginalising other relationships within family life.

In chapter 6 I will argue that it is only with reference to the practical philosophy of some Aristotelian thought and the idea of human flourishing, in combination with the mosaic of insights provided by care ethics that we can make the questions that need asking about family life intelligible, such as, what qualities do children need for flourishing? What qualities do parents and other familial caregivers need to enable and promote this flourishing, and that of other dependent family members in their care? How do parents judge when their family life is going well? What can institutions outside of family life do to aid familial flourishing?

The seventh chapter will attempt to address these questions in order to answer the overarching question: what constitutes a flourishing family life? This chapter explores

some of the key activities and relationships of family life which are constitutive of familial flourishing. The eighth chapter will then address the problem of dysfunctionality in the family. Only when we have a clear idea of what a good family might look like can we say what a bad family might look like. This chapter focuses, in particular, on the external goods of family life and the corrupting effects of these goods, as well as how a lack of these goods can be equally damaging. The ninth chapter summarises the conclusions of the thesis and its original contribution to knowledge.

1. Why MacIntyre's Aristotelianism?

1.1   Introduction

This chapter explores Aristotelian concepts and how they can be put to use in the contemporary family. MacIntyre's approach to Aristotelianism will be shown to be a practical framework, from which we can understand what constitutes a flourishing family. In the following, a precise definition of flourishing will not be given because Aristotle warns against looking for precision in the same way for everything and instead urges us to only look for the kind of precision that is appropriate for the particular sphere of enquiry. We are not attempting to define something like an atom in particle physics: ethics is not mathematics. In the same way, we cannot precisely define the good family; nor should we. As Jonathan Lear notes, 'if ethics is not a set of rules, then a treatise on ethics cannot be treated as a piece of software which one ingests in order to become a good person' (1988, 158). If this is so, then how do we find use for an Aristotelian view of human flourishing in a contemporary context? It is precisely because Aristotle does not attempt to provide a set of moral imperatives, from an abstract standpoint of pure rationality, that we can put Aristotle to work in the particularities of contemporary family life. Furthermore, it is through the developing and dynamic tradition of Aristotelian thought that we can find contemporary relevance in Aristotle's premises.

Aristotle states that one must begin with what is knowable *in relation to us*. One does not need to know *why* something is such and such in all cases as it will suffice to know that something *is* what it is because it has been well shown to be the case. This, he argues, is true of starting points and that 'Of starting points, some are grasped by induction, some perception, some by a sort of habituation, and others in other ways' (*Nicomachean Ethics*, heareafter *NE,* 1.7 1098b3-5).[3] Aristotle begins by identifying characteristically human activity, which his audience can recognise and identify with, and then persuades them that some aims are more rationally defensible than others.

However, our modern view is, according to MacIntyre, an impoverished one because there is no contemporary agreement about common goods and the ultimate good of a human life. What we think about family life, therefore, is influenced by conflicting

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[3] The translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* I use is the Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe version (Aristotle 2002).

contemporary norms and values, by government, media, global capitalism and Western consumerist culture. Yet, while there may not be agreement about the common goods of a society or the ultimate human good, there is a case to be made for generalised agreement about what is constitutive of a good family life. Since participation in family life is such a common, shared experience, general agreement about what constitutes familial wellbeing, and what the ends and functions of family life are, can be reached. However, such general agreement may also be diminished, according to MacIntyre, if it is divorced from the wider community and other human practices.

This chapter will explore an approach to Aristotelian thinking, advanced by MacIntyre, and its relevance to the thesis question in order to show why an Aristotelian theoretical framework is appropriate for understanding what constitutes familial flourishing.

1.2   Flourishing

As has already been stated, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the highest good of human activity is *eudaimonia,* translated as happiness, flourishing or wellbeing (Lear 1988, 160–161). According to Aristotle, the general public widely agree that the highest human good is wellbeing or happiness, but most people are in dispute over what this actually is (*NE* 1.4 1095a 17-23). In this thesis, the translation of *eudaimonia* as 'flourishing' will primarily be used, though sometimes reference to 'wellbeing' will be made if more appropriate; I will use them, however, to refer to the same idea. The translation of *eudaimonia* as happiness will be avoided due to its modern association with subjective feeling, transitory states and satisfaction of immediate desires. Happiness can be construed as a fleeting moment of elation or a state of ignorant self-satisfaction: it does not capture the more particular, long-term meaning of *eudaimonia*. Flourishing, on the other hand, implies development and healthy growth towards the fulfilment of one's potential. It also implies good functioning and the satisfaction of worthwhile ends.

We are still in dispute about the meaning of happiness today.[4] Its contentiousness provides yet another reason to avoid translating *eudaimonia* as happiness. Aristotle

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[4] In November 2010 the British government announced plans to measure people's psychological and environmental wellbeing with a 'happiness index'. The survey is intended to gauge the general wellbeing of citizens by looking at participants subjective happiness in order to steer government policy (Stratton 2010). The fact that the survey is focussed on subjective happiness suggests that we are still no nearer to a widely agreed upon understanding of what happiness is.

maintains that the most vulgar of men suppose *eudaimonia* to be pleasure or the satisfaction of our immediate desires (*NE* 1.5 1095b 15-16). These men he likens to grazing cattle because they live a life of consumption. The hedonistic life is, for Aristotle, not a life of action and wellbeing but a passive life controlled by appetite:

> Since the pleasure-seeker has done nothing to organize the state of his soul, thus remaining at the level of a beast, the basic appetites are in an important sense . . . directing his activities . . . they remain forces within him pulling him toward this pleasure and that (Lear 1988, 161).

As such, the satisfaction of untrained desires and a life in the pursuit of simple pleasures cannot lead to flourishing. Only the peculiarly human life lived through peculiarly human activity (as opposed to the activity of a beast) will discover the ability to truly flourish, according to Aristotle. What is particularly useful about the concept of flourishing, as opposed to happiness, is that it takes into account the whole human life. Flourishing means the full development of an organism over its life and does not rely on attempts to measure subjective transitory states of feeling. Rather, it presupposes that human beings have potentialities which they can actualise through particular forms of human activity, and it is through this realisation of potential that human beings prosper and achieve excellence. It is the rational part of the soul which guides the other more animal parts towards the good for human beings. Flourishing is, therefore, universalisable because it appeals to objective standards of wellbeing; although the constitutive means of its achievement will be particular to the social context.

Aristotle supposes that humans have an end, or *telos,* in the same way that all living organisms have an end. Having a *telos* is to be directed towards a particular goal which is an end in itself and serves no higher goal. The end is thus the cause – the driving force – of action. However, for Aristotle, the human *telos* is not a terminus or end point, where the ends justify any means. Rather, it entails living a certain kind of life of 'activity of the soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a good man to perform these well and finely, and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence'. It follows then that 'the human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with excellence . . . But furthermore it will be this in a complete life' (*NE* 1.7 1098a13-19). The fact that it must be over a complete life as opposed to a day or a month, or in one particular action, is central to Aristotelian thought. It means that one cannot be truly

flourishing if one lives in accordance with excellence, or the virtues, for only a short period and then returns to being vicious and indulging in beast-like behaviour when a particular short-term end is achieved. Such behaviour would not be the embodiment of virtue in action but rather a mere simulacrum. Emulating the actions of a good person in order to deceive or win over another — as the Vicomte de Valmont does in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* — will not, according to Aristotelian thinking, lead to flourishing, even if those actions happen to have positive outcomes, as they did for the poverty-stricken family whom the Vicomte assists. It is not enough to appear to be good: one actually has to be good, as Socrates plainly knew.

Flourishing, then, entails a life well-lived, and virtuous activity must be done for its own sake and not for the sake of some other end; for example, the end of winning another's heart. Of course, not being excellent in all of one's endeavours does not mean that one is automatically a beast or a hedonist. One may aim at excellence in one's activities without being completely successful. Moreover, one may be an excellent artist or chess player and at the same time be vicious *qua* father or husband. Having patience and dedication to one's art but not with one's family does not lead to flourishing, even if it makes one an excellent artist or makes a major contribution to the development of an artistic movement. Only those who have cultivated a virtuous character *qua* human being can live the best kind of life. Virtues, when truly habituated, should be dispositions of one's character which have application throughout one's life.[5]

Aristotle believes that being virtuous in the most complete sense is out of reach for the majority. However, MacIntyre's conception of a human practice, which embodies activity constitutive of flourishing, sociologises Aristotle so that the activities, which are constitutive of human flourishing, turn out to be *social* rather than *individual* activities.[6] As such, virtue becomes something accessible to all members of a society who participate in practical activity aiming at common ends. MacIntyre defines a practice as,

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[5] MacIntyre, in *After Virtue* (1985, chap. 15), discusses the importance of the narrative unity of a human life which is often absent in contemporary liberal societies because such societies encourage the compartmentalisation of not only the different activities we participate in, but also the different stages of our life from young to old. As such we might be encouraged to adopt a certain virtue in our work life that is appropriate to our work, which we then put to one side in our home life. The virtues are not then truly habituated and a part of our moral character but are little more than skills or dispositions, instrumental to the achievement of our goals.

[6] As opposed to the republican ideal of virtue being cultivated only in the public political activities of the state, for MacIntyre, virtue can be cultivated in a range of human practices. MacIntyre's approach is therefore much more pluralistic.

any coherent and complex form of *socially established cooperative human activity* through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended . . . In the ancient and medieval worlds the creation and sustaining of human communities – of households, cities, and nations – is generally taken to be a practice in the sense in which I have defined it. Thus the range of practices is wide: arts, sciences, games, politics in the Aristotelian sense, *the making and sustaining of family life*, all fall under the concept (MacIntyre 1985, 187–8) [*emphasis added*].

MacIntyre's conception of a social practice is thus a way for *all* human beings to actualise their potential rather than just a small elite section of society (which for Aristotle was embodied in the male Athenian citizen). A practice has goods internal to it which can only be realised through participation in that practice. There are also a related set of goods which are external or contingent which can always be achieved through alternative means. These goods are attached to the practice by accidents of social circumstance and such goods might include prestige, status, money and power (MacIntyre 1985).[7] These external goods, and their relation to the family, are explored in more depth in chapter 8 after the discussion on internal goods in chapter 7. Furthermore, according to MacIntyre, a practice entails 'standards of excellence and obedience to rules' and '. . . to enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them' (MacIntyre 1985, 190). The way that virtue is fostered in practices is through learning the standards of excellence of that practice from teachers. Kelvin Knight refers to MacIntyre's oft-cited example of the chess-playing child who is initiated into the game of chess with the incentive of candy but who eventually finds

> in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a highly particular kind of analytic skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands (MacIntyre 1985, 188).

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[7] Russell Keat also argues, more explicitly than MacIntyre, that there are goods which are human goods but which are neither external nor internal to practices. These goods might be other personal relationships such as friendship, which can be acquired within or without practices and are not unique to a particular practice, various pleasurable bodily and sensory experiences, and various 'intrinsic satisfactions' which are worthwhile for their own sake but are not internal to the practice – such as the satisfaction of mastering a certain skill or having control over one's activities (2008).

Knight argues that this socialisation of the child into the practice educates her desires. Furthermore, 'this is a good that is internal to the practice of chess, in the sense that it is limited to those who participate in the practice of chess-playing. More precisely, it may be said to be "internal to" individuals *qua* chess-players' (Knight 2008a, 230). MacIntyre's example identifies certain goods, goods which develop the person who participates in the practice, which are internal to the game of chess. They are not attached to the game by accident of circumstance, like the prestige and money which might be attached to playing chess competitively or the candy used to encourage the child to play. The development of certain virtues and skills are constitutive of the fulfilment of playing the game of chess.

1.3   Virtue

Now that we have a general understanding of flourishing as the human *telos*, though we do not have much of the content of that *telos,* further exploration of the concept of virtue, or excellence, and how it operates within the teleological scheme is needed. How does Aristotle define virtue or excellence? In book II of *NE*, Aristotle argues that virtues are not feelings, nor are they capacities because 'we do not become good or bad by nature' (*NE* 1106a 8-9) and we are not praised or blamed for how we feel without qualification, only for how we express that emotion and act on it; for example, being angry in a certain way. As such, virtues are a result of *rational choices* — how we direct emotions through reasoning to be in a certain state. Excellence of moral character, it turns out, requires the person also to be practically wise. However, virtue is not just a state of being, for Aristotle, but a *certain kind of* state. His first definition of the virtue of a human being then is 'the state that makes a human being good and makes him perform his characteristic activity well' (*NE* 1106a 23-4). However, this definition is incomplete. Aristotle also explains *how* this happens by reference to the mean, or that middle point which is neither excessive nor deficient. The mean in this context is not fixed, as it is in arithmetic, but is relative to us and as such is not one single thing or the same for all. In particular, Aristotle is interested in the virtues of character because 'it is this that is concerned with feelings and actions, and it is in these that we find excess, deficiency and the mean' (*NE* 1106b 16-8). To have the right feelings 'at the right time, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way is the mean and best; and this is the business of virtue' (*NE* 1106b 21-3). Aristotle also claims that it is

possible for there to be an excess and deficiency in *actions* and it is with both feeling and action that virtue is concerned. His second more complete definition of virtue then is:

> A state involving *rational choice*, consisting in a mean *relative to us* and *determined by reason* – the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess, the other of deficiency. It is a mean also in that some vices fall short of what is right in feelings and actions and others exceed it, while virtue both attains and chooses the mean (*NE* 1106b35 – 1107a6) [*emphasis added*].

Hitting the target of the mean is difficult because, Aristotle claims, badness is unlimited whereas people can only get things right in one way (though that one way is relative to the person, and her emotions, and the context). It also seems important to realise that even though Aristotle distinguishes between the moral and intellectual virtues, between the condition of desire and the condition of the mind, these two aspects of human excellence are inseparable. The training of desires and instincts to form a settled character *requires* practical reason. The good life is thus achieved through possession of the virtues which direct human activity towards good ends. However, it is not a simple means-ends relationship. The exercise of the virtues is not simply *one* means that human beings can choose to bring about a desired end (MacIntyre 1985, 149). Rather the exercise of the virtues is a constitutive part of a whole human life, lived at its best, 'not a mere preparatory exercise to secure such a life' (1985, 149). Now we can see how ethics is the science which enables human beings to move from a state of untutored human nature to 'man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realised-his-*telos*'.

Aristotle is keen to identify the best life with what his audience already hold in esteem or consider to be pleasurable activities, and then 'expends his efforts in establishing that what is most eudaimonistic is what is lastingly admirable rather than most sensually and subjectively pleasurable' (Knight 2007, 14). He does not deny pleasure; on the contrary, he claims that activity which is most in accordance with virtue is also pleasurable. Aristotle recognises that humans are political animals who are not self-sufficient individuals and therefore spend most of their time engaged in practical rather than contemplative activity. Moral character cannot be improved through contemplation of abstract forms as Plato believed. Thus the practical activity, or *praxis*, of politics which involves the hierarchical ordering of all other forms of activity towards the human good of flourishing is the highest form of activity after *theoria* (contemplation)*.* While *theoria* requires the exercise of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*)*, praxis* requires practical wisdom

(*phronesis*). The form of human activity which is lower than both of these, according to Aristotle, is production (*poiesis*), which requires technical expertise (*techne*). However, *techne* differs from practical and theoretical wisdom for Aristotle because he considers it to be a capacity, rather than an activity or virtue, which may or may not be acted upon and may be used for good or bad ends (Knight 2007, 18). Productive and craft activity is therefore used analogously and is not actually a form of excellence according to Aristotle. *Techne* refers to the skill of the craft, the end being the transformation of an artefact rather than the human being.[8] *Sophia* and *phronesis* on the other hand can only be for the human good.

MacIntyre is critical of Aristotle's belief that *praxis* and *poiesis* are lower forms of human activity and cannot fully actualise human potential in the way that *theoria* can. Instead, he reconceptualises Aristotle's idea of goods internal and external to the human being and applies them to the idea of a human practice. For MacIntyre's conception of a practice, goods are internal or external to this or that particular social practice, though, according to Knight, this does not mean that there are not goods internal and external to human beings as well. While internal goods denotes 'goods internal to practices', Knight claims that it also connotes goods internal to human beings qua practitioners (Knight 2008b). According to Knight, this does not lead to a contradiction because MacIntyre's 'idea is that the goods internal to practices exist prior to the participation of individual practitioners but that participation in those practices involves practitioners internalizing those goods' (Knight 2008b, 114). MacIntyre elaborates his account into a coherent moral critique of liberal modernity; central to MacIntyre's critique is the notion of a practice (Knight 2007). Thus (re)productive activity, or activity which requires technical skill, can still be ethically educative because it often requires the exercise of virtue in order to be carried out well, for example, a parent needs more than a set of skills in order to be a good parent. Skills are essentially goods of effectiveness for MacIntyre because they provide us with the potential to act for the good. Also included in goods of effectiveness are goods external to practices such as money, power and status. Again, these may enable us to do good acts or bad ones.

What, then, is the significance for Aristotle of goods, either internal or external? Having a good character is not a guarantee of *eudaimonia*, though one cannot be fulfilled without

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[8] See Tom Angier's *Techne in Aristotle's Ethics: Crafting the Moral Life* for the importance of the concept of craft in Aristotle's ethical approach (Angier 2010).

living a life in accordance with the virtues or excellences. Aristotle refers to those things that are instrumental for living well as external goods. Of these, the highest good is honour because honour is something bestowed upon us by others when we have done a noble act (*NE* 4.3 1123b 20-21). According to Aristotle external goods also include wealth or money, political power, leisure, friends, slaves and one's children (Knight 2007, 26). If these external goods are pursued as ends in themselves, then one's flourishing will be frustrated. Thus, according to Aristotle, if someone lies about herself because she takes pleasure in falsehood then she is ineffectual; if she does so for the sake of reputation (honour or status being external goods) then she is to be censured; but the one who lies for the sake of profit (also an external good) is, according to Aristotle, the more disgraceful figure (*NE* 4.7 1127b10-13). However, if a person is truthful about her life and possessions, it is 'by virtue of being such by disposition' (*NE* 4.7 1127b3). A virtuous disposition is simply the habituation of, or tendency towards, excellence in one's character. However, according to Rosalind Hursthouse, virtue also must include having certain motivations or reasons for one's actions rather than there simply being a tendency to act in a certain way. For example, having the virtue of compassion 'includes being moved by the suffering of others and treating their suffering as a reason for acting and not acting in certain ways' (Hursthouse 2002, 48).

Thus the person who always practices truth-telling about herself and her life will not have to try hard to tell the truth each day but will do so by virtue of the excellence of her character, because that is who she is and because she is motivated by good reasons to do so. It is this kind of person that will flourish according to Aristotelian thought. However, Aristotle does not deny that wealth and influence improve one's chances of living a flourishing life: a vagrant, for example, will not have the opportunity to live a flourishing life. MacIntyre similarly argues that practices cannot survive without external goods to sustain them in the pursuit of internal goods; however, the pursuit of these goods as ends in themselves will corrupt practices. MacIntyre uses a distinctly Aristotelian framework to make his claims. When Aristotle refers to internal and external goods it is usually in relation to some individual i.e. the goods are internal or external to him or herself. However, for MacIntyre philosophy presupposes sociology and Aristotle is no exception. MacIntyre thus points to the goods internal and external to practices where the good life is pursued in a plurality of ways. Furthermore, goods are teleologically ordered towards

the highest good so that external goods are instrumental to the achievement of internal goods. Internal goods are good in themselves and, therefore, constitutive of a good life.

The highest internal good is that for the sake of which all other goods are ordered. For the Aristotelian, this highest good is human flourishing, or *eudaimonia,* as argued towards the beginning of this chapter. MacIntyre appeals to the virtues because a person habituated to the virtues, through a practice, has trained their desires to enjoy what is good and most noble. That person seeks what is good for this particular practice and what is good in general. The former is hierarchically ordered towards the latter and if anyone pursues external goods for their own sake 'they would be making a mistake about what is good for humans' (Keat 2008, 47).

1.4   MacIntyre's Aristotelian framework

Thus far we have explored two important concepts in Aristotelian thought: flourishing and virtue. Furthermore, we have seen how MacIntyre begins to make these concepts relevant to contemporary social and political life. What is clear from an Aristotelian perspective is that the right degree of external goods is necessary in life for one to have the opportunity to flourish. Human beings are incapable of self-sufficiency and can only actualise their potential in the best conditions. For Aristotle, the most self-sufficient unit is the *polis* or city-state. The household (*oikos*)[9] is less self-sufficient and the individual even less so. An individual who is stateless cannot fulfil her human potential according to Aristotle. A state for Aristotle is a small-scale political community with shared rational deliberation and a common good. Therefore, we must be cautious in applying his reasoning to contemporary political conditions. The modern nation-state is not what Aristotle had in mind. For MacIntyre, it is more fruitful for us to talk about practice-based communities because it is in and through these that human beings can deliberate rationally about their shared ends. Practice-based communities tend to be local and, in the Western world, tend to provide examples of resistance to liberal individualism and capitalist forces (though, especially in *After Virtue,* they can be seen as a defeatist retreat

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[9] The *oikos* in Aristotle's time was the economically self-sufficient household. The household *was* the site of economic activity. It therefore doesn't follow that the *oikos* is a practice in MacIntyre's sense because it was the bearer of a number of practices including productive practice. For Aristotle, the household provided for the basic human needs. It wasn't self-sufficient politically and socially, however.

from the modern world). Examples of such practice-based communities are few and far between.[10] Before we can explore how MacIntyre's Aristotelianism might be applied to the contemporary family, we must first elaborate what MacIntyre's framework is.

We have seen that one cannot act well without the virtues (goods of excellence) and without the instrumental means (goods of effectiveness). Being able to complete action is central to Aristotle's ethics and good intentions are not enough to live a flourishing life. External goods are thus instrumental to enable virtuous action and, as discussed above, are not ends in themselves. Activity in this Aristotelian sense (*energeia*) is the actualisation of a being's specific potential (Knight 2007, 13). Therefore, one who is truly flourishing is one who is fully realised in a completed form. What the Aristotelian recognition of the importance of chance and prosperity demonstrates is that external goods create the necessary conditions for flourishing. External goods are the resources that make virtuous human activity possible and possession of these goods depends on how fortunate one is. What the Aristotelian perspective also illustrates, however, is that pursuit of these external goods as *ends in themselves* hinders human flourishing. At best it demonstrates ineffectuality and at worst it demonstrates badness of character.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre does not dwell on the precise range of practices in any given society, giving only a few examples from different times and places. However, practices for MacIntyre are pluralistic in that there can be practices in several different areas of social life and 'the good life for individuals typically involves engagement in many or all of these domains or kinds of practices' (Keat 2008). Instead he elaborates what a practice entails and the related concepts which are crucial to its understanding. MacIntyre notes, however, that the good of the practice is not reducible to the goods of individual practitioners. Rather, members of a practice advance the standards of excellence of their practice and progress it 'as a historically and socially given kind of activity' (Knight 2008, 230). According to MacIntyre, this relationship is a social tradition. It is from this historical, social tradition that we learn all we can about our practice, but we must also confront and question it. Moreover, 'This is what renders MacIntyre's concept of practices progressive rather than conservatively conventionalist' (Knight 2008a, 230).

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[10] Some examples of practice-based communities, which MacIntyre refers to, are fishing communities in New England in the past 150 years, Welsh mining communities, farming co-operatives in Donegal, Mayan towns in Guatemala and Mexico and ancient city-states (1999, p. 143). Other MacIntyrean scholars have also come up with examples for study such as the traditional circus (Beadle and Könyöt 2006).

Practitioners act in accordance with the rules of a practice which are means to the goods internal to practices. However, rules can be broken or changed in order to advance the practice in some way. There may also be external goods attached to a practice, such as status, wealth, power or prestige, but as MacIntyre points out, these are characteristically scarce goods so that the more one person has of them the less another has.

One further aspect of the concept of a practice relevant to our discussion is that, according to MacIntyre, as practitioners, we have to subordinate ourselves in our relationships with other practitioners. We must learn to recognise

> what is due to whom; we have to be prepared to take whatever self-endangering risks are demanded on the way; and we have to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts (MacIntyre 1985, 191).

This requires us to accept the virtues of justice, courage and honesty as a necessary component of any practice with internal goods. Thus virtues are integral to any practice. In fact, practices can be seen as schools of the virtues. To put it a different way MacIntyre states that

> The virtues are those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices (MacIntyre 1985, 191).

Thus the virtues, as goods of excellence, provide an objective reference point or standard of excellence which practitioners can use in order to define their relationships with other practitioners with whom they share common goods.

Despite the fact that many of the examples of practices used by MacIntyre and MacIntyrean scholars often require technical, artistic or scientific skill or technique, a practice is never *just* a set of technical skills, even if there is some unified purpose to those skills and even if the exercise of the skills can be enjoyed for their own sake. There needs to be, according to MacIntyre, certain goods, which are good in themselves, which guide our actions and decisions within a practice. However, desiring these goods on their own is also not enough to guide actions. Practitioners need to foster certain virtues of character which are developed through human powers of reasoning about the good and which guide a person to direct their emotions and desires towards that good. Therefore, internal goods cannot be attained or enjoyed without the habituation of virtue. Virtues

are goods internal to human beings and, once habituated, they guide our actions towards what is good for us as practitioners and as human beings.

The goods and ends of the practice are 'transformed and enriched by these extensions of human powers and by that regard for its own internal goods which are partially definitive of each particular practice or type of practice' (MacIntyre 1985, 193). By 'human powers', MacIntyre appears to mean human capacities, which are then are improved and extended by the cultivation and exercise of virtue. For example we have the capacity to care for other human beings. The cultivation of the relevant virtues such as compassion, patience, justice and friendship would extend the human power to care and enrich the goods of the practice of family life. While powers can be used for bad ends, virtues cannot. Thus, powers would fall under those goods of potentiality as discussed earlier. MacIntyre distinguishes between virtues, skills and neutral powers thus:

> Virtues differ from both skills and from character traits, such as reliability and perseverance, precisely in that they are habits directed towards goods. They are not neutral powers, equally available for the pursuit of either good or bad ends (2007, 153).

Remember that the virtues, for Aristotle, are the mean between extremes of passions. Someone who is too honest has gone too far to one extreme and does not aim at the mean. Someone who is prudent in a ruthless way is miserly and cruel and thus also misses the mean. This is not using virtue for bad ends but missing virtue completely. One may exercise a skill or capacity, however, for selfish or destructive ends. It is difficult perhaps to see how the skills of caregiving or the capacity to care about someone can be destructive – because care is widely seen to be a good thing in itself – unless one is incompetent in these skills or cares about the wrong person (an abusive partner or someone who does not care about us) or thing (one may care about fame or becoming rich). However, even if one becomes an effective caregiver, one's motivation for learning and practicing the skills of caregiving may not be good. For instance, I may give care simply to look 'good' or to receive the rewards of praise or money and as such I may not give care in the right way or at the right time or I may abandon my charge when it suits me. Even if I have the right motivation, for example if I am moved by suffering or genuinely care about my charge, I may still not have the requisite virtues (such as patience or generosity) to carry out the activity of caregiving well. However, having the right motivation for action is a better place to begin cultivating the virtues than being

motivated by goods of money or status. What is particularly Aristotelian about MacIntyre's account of a practice is, firstly, that it is teleological – goods are hierarchically ordered towards the highest good or final cause – and, secondly, that 'Someone who achieves excellence in a practice . . . characteristically enjoys his achievement and his activity in achieving' (2007, 197).

MacIntyre also argues that 'no practice can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions' (2007, 194), through which external goods are acquired for the sake of the ends of the practice. External goods are scarce resources of money, power and status, as already stated. One way to think of MacIntyre's conceptual scheme, then, is to see institutions as providing the external *conditions* for a flourishing life. Aristotle recognised well enough the need for these instrumental goods, and they are indeed *goods*, in order to pursue a life of virtue. However, problems arise when they are pursued for their own sake. When institutions subordinate the internal goods of a practice to the external goods then the practice becomes corrupted: the good of the practice becomes incidental to the goods of power, status and wealth.

MacIntyre argues that resistance to the corruption of the internal goods of the practice is the essential function of the virtues of courage, justice and truthfulness. Without these virtues the goods internal to the practice can become subordinated to the goods external and contingent to it. Preventing this subordination is one of the reasons why the virtues are important to the flourishing of a practice. Virtuous practitioners are able to resist the corrupting influence of external goods. Acting justly or truthfully might, however, mean we are less well-off or less powerful. As MacIntyre affirms,

> the cultivation of truthfulness, justice and courage will often, the world being what it contingently is, bar us from being rich or famous or powerful . . . We should therefore expect that, if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant, the concept of the virtues might first suffer attrition and perhaps something near total effacement, although simulacra might abound (MacIntyre 1985, 196).

Here we might safely assume that MacIntyre is referring to Western capitalist societies where the pursuit of external goods is encouraged by institutions of both the state and the workplace. As a result, the pursuit of virtue within these institutions is difficult, though we may still value certain dispositions, relevant to particular spheres, which are not considered appropriate in other spheres of life. Thus:

> To be a successful actor in all spheres requires both cultivating the perceived virtue of flexibility, and therefore abandoning one's integrity as a human being, and cultivating each of several different sets of norms and supposed virtues appropriate to each of one's spheres of activity toward, for example, truth-telling (Knight 2008b, 117–118).

The implications of this argument are that the compartmentalised lives many of us in Western society currently lead, do not translate to us participating in different practices. It does not translate simply because what count as good reasons in one sphere do not count at all, or are largely unintelligible, in other spheres. Practices therefore must be embedded in communal forms of life and must foster virtues which are good for human beings in all aspects of their lives, not simulacrum of virtues or neutral dispositions which are only appropriate to one sphere; for example, our workplace.

1.5   Conclusion

For MacIntyre, the range of practices is wide and includes intellectual as well as productive and deliberative activity and, of particular note for this thesis, he includes the making and sustaining of family life. According to MacIntyre, practices are where virtues are fostered. However, this is not to say that virtues are *only* exercised within practices. MacIntyre's approach is to develop Aristotelianism as a dynamic tradition of thought. Where Aristotle often refers to some well-defined human activity when speaking of human excellence, MacIntyre develops the social conception of practices which aim at common goods rather than purely individual excellence. One major difference between Aristotle's conception of *praxis* and MacIntyre's conception of social practices is that goods internal to a practice are not the same as the ultimate good of human being – *eudaimonia*. However, they are teleologically ordered in the same way, such that the ends of a practice are pursued for their own sake as good in themselves. They should also, however, constitute the ends of the ultimate human good of flourishing because practices are a way for humans to actualise their potential and cultivate virtue. This does not mean that practices are purely a means to this end but rather that they are *constitutive of* the good life. This argument, combined with MacIntyre's rejection of contemporary compartmentalised lives, resolves the problem of the excellent practitioner of a particular activity who is also a vicious human being. Socially established cooperative human activities aim at common goods and are constitutive of a good human life: they are not purely self-interested endeavours that require cooperation for the sake of individual

ends. Activity in a particular practice thus informs the individual's moral character *qua* human being.

The other development of Aristotelian thought put forward in MacIntyre's ethical theory, thanks to his early Marxism, is the proposal that some kinds of productive and practical activity require the exercise of the virtues (as well as technical skill) and are therefore capable of actualising human potential. The practice of the making and sustaining of family, which is (re)productive and requires the exercise of certain skills, it will be argued, is partially constitutive of the good life for human beings as social and political animals, as it provides our earliest form of socialisation into practices and therefore society. Furthermore, it entails not only skills, such as feeding, bathing, administering medicines, educating and socialising, or the capacity to care, but also requires the virtues to direct those skills and capacities towards good ends.

In this chapter, MacIntyre's development of the Aristotelian tradition to include a plurality of human practices, as the constitutive activities of human flourishing, has been demonstrated. In the next chapter, MacIntyre's theoretical framework of social practices and institutions will be applied to the family.

2. Applying MacIntyre's Aristotelian Framework to the Family

2.1   Introduction

In *After Virtue* MacIntyre notes that making and sustaining family life is a form of human practice. In order to develop this claim into a full account of what we should mean when we speak in contemporary situations of a family which functions well, we need to apply MacIntyre's distinction between practices and institutions, as well as internal and external goods. Such an account must also consider the insights of alternative contemporary moral approaches to the family and what these approaches take to be a well-functioning family (this will be explored in the following chapters). In this chapter I will discuss why the making and sustaining of family life (henceforth 'the practice of family life' or 'family life') is indeed a practice in MacIntyre's sense and how marriage is its institutional bearer. Furthermore, this chapter will explore how other institutions external to the family, but which nonetheless interfere with family life, impact on its capacity to achieve its goods. Despite the fact that MacIntyre seems fairly pessimistic about the possibility of shared rational agreement in contemporary Western societies, perhaps agreement can be reached on what constitutes a good, well-functioning family – from the simple fact that most human beings have a family. Not all participate in the practice of family life, but most have the opportunity to do so. However, the problem, from a MacIntyrean perspective, is that not all families are rooted in some form of community. The increasing privatisation and atomisation of family life entails that many Western families are distinct entities; separate spheres of life which do not overlap with other spheres – and which attempt to be self-sufficient – in the absence of a community of others with whom they can deliberate about shared ends. This issue will be addressed towards the end of this thesis.

In the introduction it was argued that it is through our socialisation into the practice of family life that we begin to learn to stand back from our immediate desires and reason about our own good, and the good of our family. In doing so, we learn how to sustain networks of human relationships constitutive of a good life. Initially, we learn how to sustain these networks of caregiving and receiving from other family members who care for us. However, if we are badly cared for, we fail to learn this. Who cares for us might not always be parents but may also include other family members – and not just when we are

children. Families are therefore diverse and include a range of roles and relationships. Marriage, on the other hand, is a (now state-sanctioned) site of institutionalised status and power-relations. Who is allowed to marry is determined by the state and is often influenced by wider religious and cultural institutions. The presence of state-sanctioned marriage in a family should not, from a MacIntyrean perspective, determine the goodness of a family. However, if the institution of marriage is in good order, it should play a role in sustaining family life.

Martha Nussbaum also argues that family forms are diverse and that they should be judged on their ability to cultivate a threshold level of capabilities, rather than on their structure or form (Nussbaum 2000). However, unlike Nussbaum, I believe it is necessary to distinguish the practice of family life from other social practices which enable similar human functions but have different ends. Examples include the women's collectives Nussbaum studied in India (Nussbaum 2000) or L'Arche communities which aim to enable people with and without disability to live more interdependent lives. The practice of making and sustaining a family life is found across different cultures and throughout history. It can therefore be understood as a cultural universal, though of course its form and its functions vary widely. Furthermore, it is the first practice most human beings become a part of and, with regards to one's family of origin, have no choice about being inducted into. It is also a unique practice in that it socialises children, introducing them to other social practices through the guidance of older family members who act as their primary guardians throughout their early dependency. The socialisation and care of children is widely regarded as one of the primary functions of the family.

In this chapter I firstly identify the key ways in which the making and sustaining of family life is indeed a practice and how this relates to MacIntyre's wider conceptual scheme, in particular his conception of a social tradition. Secondly, I explore what this means for the family and the various forms it takes. Thirdly, I look at the relationship of the practice of family life to the institution of marriage, and to external institutions, and discuss the potential corrupting power of these institutions on family life.

2.2 Family life as a social practice

If the making and sustaining of family life is indeed a social practice, then it has goods internal to it which develop the practitioner in a way they could not be developed outside

of family life. It follows from this that family life is uniquely valuable. But it also assumes that the practice is in good order. We are all, or should be, acutely aware that family life has the potential to be as damaging as it has to be developing and fulfilling. In fact, it is one of the practices most open to abuse because of how vulnerable to the power of others it makes certain less powerful members of society i.e. women, children, the sick and the disabled.

That members of a practice advance the standards of excellence of their practice and progress it 'as a historically and socially given kind of activity' is not to suggest that all family members in a given society somehow revolutionise family life through their activity. Yet each family member *is* learning from other, typically older, members of their own family and from the general standards set by others in their own society, and then contributing to those standards and that body of knowledge. One does not engage in the practice of family life as an adult with an abstract view-from-nowhere about how one ought to participate in that practice. There are certain expectations which govern family life in a given historical and social context, and one does not begin the next stage of family life as an adult without some engrained knowledge of these standards and expectations.

As children, we are socialised with sets of rules about how to behave and certain standards which are appropriate to family life. Later, as adults, we learn from those around us through participation in other practices as well as drawing on our own experiences. When we enter into family life, either through birth, adoption or through choice, it is not just a relationship with those who are part of the family we create but also a relationship with past practitioners, particularly those who extended or improved the practice in some way. Our relationship may be with those from whom we are immediately descended or with those who changed the form of family life, or the way we raise children, in our particular culture, for better or for worse. Every practice has its own history and the history of making and sustaining family life is not a singular history but a complex, divergent and often overlapping collection of histories, which vary according to cultural, religious and political norms as well as upheavals. We engage with the traditions of our own families through stories about our past, which are often passed down from grandparents. However, they are also transmitted through local museums and heritage centres that document and record local and national histories, not just of politics, work

and nation, but also of how war and immigration affected family life, as well as the histories of rural farming families and families of the industrial age. Understanding how modern family life has evolved from and relates to family life historically, is also why history lessons at school should not only be about important dates, battles, political struggle, monarchies and invasions but should also be about where we came from, how we have changed and what lessons we can learn about family life from the past, both good and bad.

Thus far we can infer, from MacIntyre's claims about practices, that the practice of family life has goods which are internal to the practice and which are only fully realisable through that practice. As was discussed in the previous chapter, there may also be external goods attached to being part of a family such as status, wealth, power or prestige but as MacIntyre points out, these are characteristically scarce goods so that the more one person, or family, has of them the less another has. These are the kinds of goods which Rawls' *Theory of Justice* is concerned to distribute more equitably and whose distribution through the family is problematic for the realisation of social justice (Rawls 1999) (see chapter 3 for further discussion). They are the goods which Aristotle claims are 'such things necessary to life' (*The Politics* I 1256b 30)[11]. As a result, if a family lacks resources that are 'necessary to life', such as money, shelter, food and other basic material goods, it will not be able to function well because its members will struggle to survive. If they have only these basic goods to a minimal degree but not enough to engage in worthwhile activity within and outside of the family, thus actualising the potential of each family member, then they will simply be surviving or existing rather than flourishing. Thus there are other less basic external goods than food, shelter and money which are instrumental to sustaining a well functioning family.

Furthermore, in order for families to function well, family members must subordinate themselves in their relationships with other family members and must accept the virtues of justice, courage and honesty. Just as MacIntyre's chess playing child is willing to cheat in her early days of learning chess, so too are children willing to lie, pretend to be good, blame others for their mistakes and so on to escape punishment, be rewarded or receive affection. Equally some parents may be willing to bribe their children in order to maintain

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[11] The translation of the *Politics* used is the Cambridge Texts in Political Thought version (Aristotle 1996) which uses Jonathan Barnes' translation from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Translation,* Princeton University Press, 1984.

the appearance of a well-ordered family life or for peace and quiet, or they may be less than honest with their spouse because they lack courage to speak up and ask for help with domestic responsibilities or with financial difficulties. Courage is also needed in spades within family life to stand up to injustice, be it where a parent or relative has a favourite child and demonstrates this in his actions, to the detriment of the other child, or where a parent or spouse is abusive.

MacIntyre's list of virtues (justice, courage and honesty) necessary to a practice seem particularly relevant to the practice of family life. We certainly owe it to other members of our family to care for them, listen to them and to share our external goods with them; we have to take risks for our children or other vulnerable family members which might endanger our own wellbeing; and as family members we will only learn what our own inadequacies are through honesty from those for whom we are responsible or who are responsible for us.

What feminist thought highlights, however, is that those in family life who have traditionally subordinated themselves in their relationships with others have primarily been women as wives, mothers, daughters and caregivers in general. This has resulted in a lack of recognition of what is due to women in families, women who have often taken on subordinate roles because of the expectations and standards of excellence in family life of their particular social context. Although MacIntyre does not address this particular injustice, it seems that his conceptual scheme is equipped to do so. Arguably, the institution of marriage has instantiated and provided legitimacy to oppression. The institution of marriage has historically, and often still, allocated power in a hierarchical and patriarchal way, institutionalising gendered power structures. Before we can discuss in more detail what is meant by the corrupting power of an institution on a practice, however, we must first look at what the practice of family life involves.

2.3   What the practice of family life involves

Thus far, I have argued that family life is indeed a practice. Certainly, the making and sustaining of family life cannot be reduced to a set of technical goal-directed skills even if parents and other caregivers require certain skills to carry out their role well. The practice of family life is more than the basic skills required to raise a healthy child, for example, because otherwise parents and other caregivers could be replaced by machines or paid

employees[12]. Being a good parent or a good sister or grandparent cannot be learned from a handbook or a parenting class, even though some would have us believe that we can and must do so, and even though learning basic skills may be a good start for some parents. One may be able to, for example, learn a technique for negotiating the temper tantrums of a child but this alone does not make a good parent. Specifically, a child may be raised physically healthy by receiving appropriate nourishment and shelter, and by taking part in appropriate exercise, but the practice of family life, when successful, also develops the child's moral character, intellectual capacities and creates a nurturing set of relationships between family members.

How does the Aristotelian tradition help us to understand what a well-functioning family in contemporary situations is? Firstly, it illustrates the difference between goods which are purely instrumental and goods which are good for their own sake; in other words, constitutive of a good life. Secondly, it emphasises the importance of thinking about the common good of the practice of family life and how the family might deliberate about its ends. Justice is an important virtue for achieving the common good. Without just social relations between family members some members will suffer the injustice of the position of others. For example, it would be unjust if, all other things being equal, the responsibility of caregiving fell to the daughter of a sick parent and not equally to his sons; particularly if the only reason for her bearing full responsibility is because of her gender. Thirdly, Aristotelianism provides an account of the transformation of inclinations into virtue through habituation. In a familial or intimate relationship with another we act from an affectionate regard for that other. MacIntyre, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, argues that it is through the education of dispositions (i.e. the affections, sympathies and inclinations) that we can act both justly and generously towards another who suffers from certain deprivations. And while one could argue that our affections are not ours to command, MacIntyre responds that we can train our inclinations to feel as well as to act, and to act with and from a certain amount of feeling (MacIntyre 1999).

Virtuous action usually does not come naturally to human beings, though we may feel affectionate towards intimate others or towards those with whom we sympathise. Rather we require an education into such virtuous action and feeling, and this begins with our families, where we first form intimate and highly particular relationships. Above all, with

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[12] Taken to its extreme we might have a *Brave New World* scenario (Huxley 1955).

those for whom we feel a natural affection, we can educate this feeling so that we act appropriately and give both generously and justly to those people and to others. Through the education of inclinations we give care willingly and ungrudgingly, without any analysis of what we might get in return. To explain this further, MacIntyre argues that the contrast between self-interested market behaviour and altruistic behaviour delineated by Adam Smith, obscures those activities where the goods achieved are genuinely common goods 'as the goods of networks of giving and receiving are' (MacIntyre 1999, 119). What altruism translates to, according to MacIntyre, is 'blandly generalized benevolence' towards the abstract Other, which makes us feel good about ourselves (1999, 119). Thus egoism and altruism are both forms of self-interestedness. According to MacIntyre these categories do not allow us to think about what qualities are needed in order for us to participate in relationships with particular others and learn to share common goods; rather they only allow us to think about ourselves and our initial desires. What MacIntyre wants us to think about is the relationship between justice and generosity which is not usually recognised (1999, 120-8).

There need to be, according to MacIntyre, certain goods, which are good in themselves, which, through reasoning about the good life, guide our actions and decisions within the family. However, desiring these goods on their own is also not enough to guide actions. Family members need to foster certain virtues of character which are developed through habituation and which guide a person to direct their emotions and desires towards a particular worthwhile good. Therefore, the internal goods of family cannot be attained or enjoyed without the habituation of the relevant virtues, and how we order those goods, and determine what is worthwhile, cannot be done without practical reasoning and rational deliberation with other family members.

The traditional catalogue of the virtues, if cultivated in the young, allows them to become independent practical reasoners; but because of our inherent vulnerability as human animals, we must also cultivate the necessary counterpart to these virtues of independence and they are the virtues of acknowledged dependence. Otherwise we will never know when it is necessary or appropriate to depend on the reasoning or care of another. MacIntyre admits that there is no central virtue in the conventional list of virtues which we can say is exhibited in relationships of giving and receiving. While generosity and justice are both qualities that may be related to such relationships, neither supply

what is needed, seeing as one can be just without being generous and one can be generous without being just. MacIntyre argues the central virtue of acknowledged dependence must then contain aspects of both. For us to have just-generosity then, we must exhibit uncalculating giving because we owe it to the particular other that needs it: 'Because I owe it, to fail to exhibit it is to fail in respect of justice; because what I owe is uncalculating giving, to fail to exhibit it is also to fail in respect of generosity' (MacIntyre 1999, 121). Following Thomas Aquinas, MacIntyre shows that we must cultivate dispositions which allow us to exemplify, in one action, the various virtues of doing good. This one action might be what we have called caring activity or caregiving. If we attend to someone in need, we must act justly, liberally, out of charity and out of pity. Care must therefore embody all of these virtues. Through being able to act in such a way we are then able to sustain relationships of giving and receiving. However, this does involve training our desires and affections. Therefore, when we respond to someone who is in need, we act virtuously from affectionate regard for that particular other. In other words, through the cultivation and habituation of the virtues of acknowledged dependence, which are complementary to the virtues of independence, we can sustain our relationships of giving and receiving. To not act from such an inclination, of affectionate regard for another, is a sign of moral inadequacy according to MacIntyre. We train this in ourselves and others, such as children, through habituation, repeating the virtue-embodying activity again and again in our day-to-day lives until it becomes second nature.

As stated in the previous chapter, a person who achieves excellence in a practice characteristically enjoys his achievement and his activity in achieving. Thus with family life, a parent characteristically enjoys expending his efforts on raising his child to be a good and flourishing adult, and children characteristically enjoy learning and developing their relationships. For example, Nel Noddings describes the burdens of parenting as joys:

> When my infant wriggles with delight as I bathe or feed him, I am aware of no burden but only a special delight of my own . . . Many of the "demands" of caring are not felt as demands. They are, rather, occasions that offer most of what makes life worth living (Noddings 1984, 52).

It is not only the flourishing of the cared-for which is fostered in the act of caregiving but also the flourishing of the caregiver. As Aristotle teaches us, we can find pleasure and enjoyment in doing what is good, and it is through the cultivation of virtues that our desires are transformed to want what is good, not just what is immediately felt.

Caring activity is a constitutive part of human flourishing; not to give care generously and justly when it is needed is to be morally deficient. But also, due to our vulnerability, we often need the care of others in order to flourish. MacIntyre maintains that we, as social animals, usually find ourselves in complex networks of giving and receiving where often how much we can give depends somewhat on how much we have received. However, what we give and receive is not a matter of strict reciprocity or cost-benefit calculation, as in a market relationship, because often those that we give to are not the same as those that we have received from and, more importantly, what we owe is uncalculating giving. We ought to always remember to whom it is we are in debt (usually our parents) but often we do not know who it is that we will be called upon to give to. If we have children it is clear who we are called upon to give to, but we are often also called upon by other family members, members of our community, friends or strangers who may need us without warning. And if we are called upon to give care to our parents, what we give is incommensurable with what they gave to us by way of care and nurture. Hence a network of giving and receiving, which characterises a family, is not based on some form of market relations or abstract rationality. For the reason that we often do not know in advance what it is that another whom we are called upon to care for will need, we set no limits to those needs, though we often call upon others to help us to tend to those needs.

Through practicing different types of friendship, or what Aristotle called *philia*, with intimate others, particularly family members on whom we are so often dependent, we learn how to cultivate the virtue of just-generosity towards strangers and intimates alike, as well as recognise our own vulnerability and dependencies. MacIntyre stresses that we must acknowledge our dependence on others. Without that understanding, we cannot understand how others might need us. If someone has been deprived of the affectionate regard or *philia* of others, then it falls to those who have not been so deprived to tend to their deprivations. True character friendship (the best kind of *philia*) in the Aristotelian sense can be used as a paradigm for how we should treat people who suffer such deprivations.

The family is the smallest and most natural kind of community. The making and sustaining of a common life is generally considered by Aristotelians to be natural because human beings are social animals and desire to live with others and share common goals. Discussing *philia* in book eight of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle singles out friendship

between members of the same family as having more of the pleasant and useful about it than those not related by family, insofar as they have a more shared life and belong more to one another. He argues

> No one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other good things . . . since what use would such prosperity be if they were deprived of the possibility of beneficence, which occurs most, and is most to be praised, in relation to friends? (1155a5-10).

Furthermore, what counts as justice is different depending on the friendship, so that it is more unjust, according to Aristotle, to fail to help out a brother than a stranger. Aristotle states that

> It is the friendship between good people, those resembling each other in excellence, which is complete; for each alike of these wishes good things for the other in so far as he is good, and he is good in himself (*NE* VIII 3. 1156b7-10).

Thus if a parent is good, she will want her child to be good and wish good things for him or her, and, therefore, the child is likely to resemble her in excellence as he or she grows into an adult. Similarly, adults would not form families together if they did not wish good things for their spouse or partner and find in them an equality of excellence; though of course Aristotle did not believe men and women could equal each other in excellence as women were considered to be deficient in reason and virtue. However, I believe that disregarding this aspect of Aristotle's account of human nature does not damage his account of friendship. In fact I consider it to be more damaging to Aristotle's account of friendship, particularly in the family, to assume the inferiority of women when we now know women do equal men in terms of moral and intellectual character. Both Hollie Mann (2012) and Sibyl Schwarzenbach (2009) argue that while the friendship most valued by Aristotle is between persons already of equal character, both committed to living a life in accordance with excellence, the friendship between family members, particularly those characterised by inequality and caregiving, can also cultivate the capacities for character friendship and develop into true character friendship. In fact, Schwarzenbach argues that this is indeed desirable and that it should be the end of parent-child relationships over a complete life (2009, 49-50). Moreover, Mann suggests that 'friends are most valuable because they form an important structure in which we learn other-regarding thought and action, and they also become the enabling conditions for our own acting and doing well, for living virtuously' (2012, 198). If friends do not find equality of excellence, then their

relationship is likely to fail unless it is based on utility or pleasure and these are usually not long-lasting on their own, according to Aristotle. Families must, therefore, be based on character friendship, which means that each must want the good life for the others with whom they form families and a good common life for the activities in which they share. What Mann says of good friendship in general is particularly applicable to the relationships between family members. They are important,

> not simply because they make us feel good or provide us with a sense of solace and security, though they surely do that, but because they call on us to do well by others, to act benevolently toward those with whom we share an ethical and political life, and they are the contexts within which we learn how to do this successfully (2012, 198-9).

Familial *philia* then provides the first relationships in which we learn about the needs of others, how to live a good life and how to share our goods with particular others in accordance with the virtues. On an Aristotelian account, then, in order to flourish family members must find their good in common and, as I will argue, the internal goods of family life require care of each family member for one another. Only through exercising certain virtues within mutually caring relationships can these goods be achieved, and the cultivation of these virtues will not be a means to an end but will rather be constitutive of the good human life.

The practice of making and sustaining family life, broadly defined, thus fulfils certain functions and aims at certain goods, as has been argued. The practice is usually composed of mutually supportive adults engaged in relationships characterised by love and/or biological ties, often raising children or caring for other dependent family members related through blood, law or custom. The practice of family life in Western societies is usually situated within one household, though, due to increasing geographical mobility, many families stretch across multiple households and geographical regions. As such, family life in the West (particularly Anglo-American countries) has become increasingly atomised, fragmenting the extended family and reducing it to its most nuclear form. This form of the family has been seen by some social theorists as the ideal for family life to succeed in an increasingly competitive and heartless world (Lasch 1997; Parsons 1949). However, the practice varies greatly from one cultural and historical context to the next. It is important not to define family life too prescriptively, therefore, because the family is probably one of the most variable and adaptable practices in human social life. As Munoz-Darde argues, it is this adaptability which makes it so striking as a permanent part of

social life (1999, 59). Archard similarly claims 'the family is above all the great survivor; indeed it seems inconceivable that any modern society should be able do without it in some form' (2012, 132–3).

One thing families need to be is adaptable to changes in their fortunes and circumstances. Biological or legally-prescribed roles often become blurred when circumstances demand it. Cultural or legal norms do not commit individuals to one familial role throughout their lives and, as a result, we often find grandparents or aunts and uncles parenting the children of their own offspring or siblings, respectively. There are also many examples of young carers looking after sick or disabled parents, or of adult siblings living together in old age for mutual support. These different arrangements may be more or less unconventional; some may be unjust and may require external interference from society. The basic point, however, is that we must not assume that conventional families with roles assigned by cultural or legal norms are always the best kinds of families. It makes more sense to accept a wide variation in the formation of families.

On the other hand, I would rule out communes or institutional care as examples of the practice of family life. Communes, with communal child-rearing, economic inter-dependency or a shared religious or philosophical vision are not families, but share some of the characteristics of families situated in larger communities such as neighbourhoods, religious congregations and small villages. In fact, they may often constitute examples of what MacIntyre refers to as practice-based communities. They are not families in themselves because they generally come about for ends which are distinctive from the internal goods of family life and are better characterised as intentional communities. They might have political or religious goals or they may adopt an experimental lifestyle.[13] They may also aim to perform the same functions as family life but usually they have further ends and, unless they are all part of a kinship group rather than simply choosing to live communally, then it is difficult to see how they are a family as opposed to a commune. What I am interested in, for the purposes of answering my initial question, is the socially-established practice of family life and how it can function well. Communes

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[13] Examples of different communes might be hippy land communes, kibbutzim (Israeli collective community), eco-villages, urban co-housing, co-operatives, L'Arche communities (an alternative to the institutionalisation of people with disabilities), Indian women's collectives (as discussed by Nussbaum (2000)).

have their own separate social and historical development and their cultural significance varies according to their wider goals, whether political, religious or experimental. Furthermore, their goals often run counter to the dominant culture in which they are situated and offer an alternative way of life.

I have also ruled out institutionalised care as a form of the family, simply because institutions such as elder care homes or children's homes exist when families cannot satisfy particular human needs due to either a loss of family (where there are no family members left alive), deficiencies in the practice of family life or a lack of external goods needed to maintain care. Institutionalised care is the expression of society's duty to care for those individuals who are deprived of the attentive and affectionate regard of others (MacIntyre 1999) or whose families do not have the resources to care for them alone. It is a matter of just-generosity that society provides for those who are left alone in the world or whose families cannot provide for them, when we consider that this deprivation could happen to any one of us at any time and when we consider each human being to be of equal worth. Institutional care is, therefore, not a replacement for the family but either complements it or substitutes for it in extreme cases.

Within the family, there is no institutional body which selects those people, deemed to be good caregivers, to be parents or other relatives, except in adoption cases. Good parents perhaps choose each other or choose to have children together on the grounds that each thinks the other to be a good caregiver, or has the qualities needed to be a good partner and parent, but there is no formal assessment of skill or interview process to determine each other's qualities. Within the family there is likely to be investment in the wellbeing of others because of the bonds which family life fosters. Furthermore, most people are not motivated to care about family members because of the rewards of external goods but because they genuinely love and care about members of their family. This is not to suggest that family members are never distracted from the internal goods of family life by external goods. Indeed it will be argued that this is often how families become dysfunctional or break down altogether.

Firstly, however, the discussion will turn to the role of institutions in family life. To what extent is the institution of marriage good for the family? Does it cement the bonds between parents (or potential parents) to provide a stable family life or does it distribute

power unequally so that some family members are left powerless? Finally, what roles do other institutions external to family life play in sustaining or subordinating the family?

2.4   Institutions of the family

This section will consider the institution of marriage and other institutions external to the family, created for the sake of sustaining family life, in MacIntyrean terms, in order to determine in what ways family life is sustained by these institutions. It will further consider in what ways the practice of family life can be corrupted by the institution of marriage and other institutions. Moreover, I will be arguing that the pursuit of external goods as ends in themselves damages family life and the wellbeing of family members, particularly as family life is where human beings are first educated about virtues and vices.

If marriage was merely about status, the formalisation of power relations, or the acquisition of wealth, then it would provide a weak and unstable foundation for the practice of family life and would corrupt the goods internal to the life of that family. Examples of this are: the person who marries for money or to improve their social status, or the man who wants to formalise his authority over his wife, thus reinforcing patriarchal relations. On the other hand, the corrupting influence of the institution on the practice may not only be the result of an individual's motivations for entering into that institution. It may be a result of the institutional form; for example, a marital system that subordinates women to men. Practitioners who have cultivated the virtues have the capacity to resist the corrupting power of the institution. One key way in which the practice-embodying institution of marriage has undermined and corrupted the practice of family life throughout history has been through the patriarchal power relations of the social and political environment that the institution reinforces. John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet Taylor resisted the power relations of the institution of marriage in their time when Mill recorded a formal protest against the powers given to men over their wives' rights and property. In reference to these powers Mill stated:

> I, having no means of legally divesting myself of these odious powers (as I most assuredly would do if an engagement to that effect could be made legally binding on me), feel it my duty to put on record a formal protest against the existing law of marriage, in so far as conferring such powers; and a

solemn promise never in any case or under any circumstances to use them (Mill 1984, 99).

Mill did not limit his protest to his own marital circumstances either but also fought to have the institution changed and wrote extensively about the issue of women's rights in relation to marriage.

The conceptual distinction between the practice of making and sustaining family life and the institution of marriage is useful because it allows us to understand family life as a socially constituted activity. The activity of family life is sustained or corrupted by its institutional bearer, depending on whether the goals embodied in that institution are directed towards the good of the practice or instead towards external goods. The practice of family life is sustained not so much by the household, which only distributes wealth acquired elsewhere and is no longer an economically productive unit in the Western world (as it was for Aristotle),[14] but by other institutions of employment outside of the home and of the state. Household income, usually from external sources, and state institutions of welfare provide the external conditions necessary for family life to survive and even flourish. The institution of the family is now primarily marriage. Married persons share their economic resources from work and provide for dependent family members and where marriage fails, other institutions—usually state ones but also including charities, increasingly private profit-making agencies and to some extent religious institutions—step in to provide support in the form of welfare, advice, help with caregiving, housing, et cetera. Without support, either from other family members or from external institutions, family caregivers are unlikely to be able to carry out the activity of caregiving well.

To draw a parallel, a caregiver working in a care home similarly needs resources (e.g. a decent wage and time off) to be able to give good care. An overburdened and overworked caregiver, whether providing care for a wage or out of love or obligation, is unlikely to flourish or be able to assist the one being cared for to flourish (Sanders and Kittay 2005). For a person giving care to someone with dementia, anger and frustration, which can easily result from caregiving due to the burdens inherent in the activity, will not enable a caregiver to give care well or enable the caregiver to flourish. Caregivers who are not well supported with family and respite or colleagues, resources, decent pay

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[14] There are of course exceptions, noted earlier, such as family farms and traditional circuses.

and enough time off are going to be more susceptible to losing control over their character and giving in to the vices of anger directed at the cared-for, frustration and impatience. Thus, even if an institution recognises the importance of the virtues in the staff it employs or even if a family member has all the virtues of a good caregiver, virtue will not be enough if that caregiver is over-worked, underpaid, powerless, and emotionally and physically tired all of the time. While most family carers would not expect to be paid for their work, they still need enough financial resources, respite and a strong network of support to carry out their caregiving role well and to flourish. An example of the kind of support caregivers require is provided by Eva Kittay in her discussion of the United States Family and Medical Leave Act which she argues is 'a rare piece of social policy insofar as it recognizes a public responsibility for dependency care' (1995, 9). The policy is designed to protect family caregivers in their role, to the extent that they are permitted unpaid leave for caregiving regardless of gender and are not forced to return to work or risk losing their job; although Kittay also discusses the extent to which the policy is still very limited in its scope.

 The care home is also part of a set of wider institutions which support the practice of making and sustaining family life. Where good caregiving cannot be provided within the family due to the lack of resources or time, or where it can only be partially provided, paid caregivers support families to sustain the very young, the elderly and the disabled through nursery schools, sheltered accommodation, home help, palliative care and residential homes, to name a few. Being entirely responsible for a dependent other, whether through choosing to have children or finding oneself responsible for a relative with a disability or age-related illness, is more than one person can cope with alone. It can be physically demanding, economically fraught and emotionally straining (Sanders and Kittay 2005, 15).

However, if good caregiving, within the family or within institutions which sustain caring practices that supplement the family, requires the exercise of individual virtue then how can it be 'valued' materially? In other words, is paying for care immoral? My argument, drawing on MacIntyre's theoretical framework of practices and institutions and internal and external goods, is that virtue on its own is not enough because care also requires resources both for the activity itself and to sustain the caregiver. On the other hand, there are those who think that throwing a lot of money at caregiving is the best response,

but a well-paid caregiver who does not have the necessary virtues will not likely be able to provide good care and will not flourish in his or her role. Thus there needs to be institutional acknowledgment of the role of the virtues in good caregiving. Indeed, in the practice of family life, a rich family does not necessarily make for the most caring family. Wealth or material possessions are not a substitute for good care. Caregiving in family life is essential to its flourishing (*qua* family) and for the good of human beings (*qua* family members) precisely insofar as the success of caregiving relies on the cultivation and day-to-day deployment of the virtues. State support for caregiving in family life is, therefore, ultimately justifiable insofar as the state is concerned with the genuine flourishing of its citizens and not simply because financial resources (absent virtue) yield effective forms of care.

One of the great dangers to the family of these supplemental institutions is that they can become too involved in family life and damage a family's ability to achieve their internal goods. For example, social workers might be able to decide what kind of care and housing an elderly person needs (through a community care assessment in the UK), which may contradict what that person's family thinks she needs. The family may not have the space or resources to directly care for their elderly family member but nonetheless want to be near her and be as involved in her care as they can. Not only does the danger lie in the power the social worker has over these decisions, it also lies in what drives such decisions; and often a driving factor is budgets and funding (Priestley 1998, 663–666). In such cases, the decision about a person's care might be driven by prioritisation of available funds, or staying within budgetary targets, rather than prioritising what is best for the family member and how best to facilitate the family's involvement in her care. Mark Priestley refers to this issue as a '"glass ceiling" of budgetary constraints' (1998, 663).

Consequently, the virtues are not only needed to give good care but are also needed to resist the corrupting power of institutions. This is another reason why paid caregivers working in large institutions need the virtues in order to sustain their practice. Without these virtues the goods internal to the practice of family life or other caregiving practices can become subordinated to the goods external and contingent to it.

Furthermore, an increase in the external goods of caregivers, as opposed to those of the institution through increased profits, may also help caregivers to resist their own

exploitation. Power, through unionization, and money, through wages which reflect the true value of care work to society, would greatly strengthen the position of care-workers in society. In the case of the institution of marriage, historically women have been given a subordinate role which often went hand-in-hand with caregiving. Giving women greater power in the marital relationship has allowed them to begin to change caring practices and has allowed men a greater role in caregiving, supported in the UK, for example, by the introduction of family-centred policies such as paid paternity leave.

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a revisionary Aristotelian approach to the family in order to understand what constitutes a well functioning family in contemporary society. MacIntyre's practices and institutions framework was applied to the family. This framework sociologises Aristotle's own naturalistic thinking about action to include a range of different cooperative human activities as constitutive of the good life; not just political and contemplative activity, only accessible to a well-educated, leisured elite. For Aristotle, the good life cannot be found in such a range of activities because any kind of production, including the management of children's upbringing, he regarded as not a 'free activity, or *praxis,* and therefore as inappropriate for free, male citizens' (Knight 2008b, 117). From MacIntyre's revisionary Aristotelian perspective then, the practice of family life, with its (re)productive activity, can be understood as constitutive of human flourishing for both men and women.

Furthermore, MacIntyre adds to his version of Aristotelianism the concept of an institution which is created in order to sustain a practice. Through the institution, or set of institutions, external goods are necessarily sought which are then subordinated to the goods internal to the practice of family life which it sustains, in order for the practice to flourish and enable its members to achieve their goods in common. However, MacIntyre also recognises that because the purpose of institutions is to acquire external goods, they are often a threat to the good functioning of practices and their practitioners. When the goods internal to the practice of family life (the goods of excellence that participation in the practice cultivate in its members) are subordinated to the goods of effectiveness (those goods external to the practice such as money, power and status, and goods such as

skills which are then used to achieve external goods) then the practice ceases to function well and practitioners become vulnerable to corruption by these goods.

We are now closer to answering the question proposed at the beginning. A family which is functioning well is a family in which adult members are able to reason well about their good in relation to the goods of family life. Those responsible within the family for the care of dependent others are able to judge what is best for those dependent others whilst allowing and assisting those dependent others to develop their own practical reasoning as far as they can. In a well-functioning family, adults also foster a network of mutually supportive caring relationships into which young children are socialised. Furthermore, family members are aware of the history of their activity and its rules and standards of excellence. They are able to fully understand, interpret and question those rules when required in order to advance the practice as a socially given activity. In a well functioning family, the goods of family life are not be subordinated by any family member to external goods which may be attached to the family as an accident of circumstance. Finally, a well functioning family is adaptable to changes in fortunes and circumstances and recognises that roles are not fixed biologically or legally. Family members inhabit multiple roles simultaneously, throughout their lives, depending on their relationship to other members and the ethical demands of those relationships.

Because the family is, with a few exceptions, no longer economically self-sufficient and yet is increasingly isolated from local communities, institutions designed to supplement the family (such as state institutions of care) are increasingly important in Western countries. These institutions have the power to interfere with family life for the good of the family in order to aid dysfunctional families, support those who cannot provide care and provide what is needed for those who no longer have families. The goods internal to family life, however, are also vulnerable to corruption by these other institutions designed to supplement the family. The power of these institutions has the potential to lead them to attempt to replace the family, rather than supplement it. Furthermore, the goals of the institutions might not be driven primarily by the good of the families they are designed to support, but by external and contingent concerns such as budgetary targets.

In a society where the state is not fit for the moral education of its citizens, perhaps the practice of making and sustaining family life is the best chance people have for education into the virtues, as long as the family is able to resist the corrupting influence of the

institutional pursuit of external goods which do not cultivate human excellence. Virtues are required for this resistance, so it helps if those adults who found families already exercise the virtues. Thus adults concerned only with the satisfaction of their immediate or self-interested desires, perhaps do not make the best family members and may enter into marriage and the creation of a new family for bad reasons.

We do not yet have a full answer to the thesis question of what a flourishing family life involves, however. Further development and analysis of the goods internal to family life is needed alongside discussion of how families can become dysfunctional. Firstly, I will critically explore three alternative contemporary approaches to the family in moral and political thought, which differ substantively from Aristotelian thinking, particularly in relation to how they conceptualise institutions and their relation to family life. This comparative assessment is done in order to demonstrate the contribution a MacIntyrean analysis can bring to the discussion of what constitutes a good family.

3. Liberalism and the Family

3.1 Introduction

In the first part of this chapter I will explore John Rawls' approach to the family and how it is situated within his theory of justice. Like MacIntyre, Rawls also refers to social practices and institutions but for Rawls the two terms denote the same thing within society. As such he switches from talking about practices, in his 1958 paper on 'Justice as Fairness', to institutions by the time he writes *A Theory of Justice*. In *A Theory of Justice,* what we have called the social practice of family life Rawls understands as an institution within the basic structure of society, which the state is concerned to distribute primary goods to in accordance with the principle of justice as fairness. For Rawls, individuals within these institutions are free to pursue their own conceptions of the good in accordance with the principles of justice. The family should, therefore, be treated neutrally by the state, in terms of the conception of the good its members pursue, except where the family might create injustices for its members, in which case the state has a duty to do what it can to reduce these injustices.

The idea of liberalism as a tradition in MacIntyre's sense with its own conception of the good, as opposed to a doctrine of neutrality, will also be explored in this chapter. Not all contemporary liberals agree with Rawls that the state can indeed be neutral between different conceptions of the good life. Russell Keat argues that, in perfectionist liberalism, autonomy is seen as a human good and the state is, in principle, permitted to secure it for its citizens. He draws on Raz's idea that the human good of autonomy is an achievement rather than a given feature of human beings. For Raz, an 'autonomous person is part author of his own life. His life is, in part, of his own making' (1988, 203). Autonomy is incompatible with individualism because autonomy requires, not just a range of options but acceptable options which he argues entails the provision of collective goods. Other liberals who reject liberal claims to neutrality also argue that 'classic liberal theories, whether contractarian, utilitarian or deontological, depend upon a more concrete social ethos or ethic than they explicitly acknowledge' (Sullivan 1990, 150). In other words, they claim that liberalism does have its own general conception of the good; one that is sceptical about dogma and attempts to maximise individuals' opportunities to explore different moral, religious and political forms of the good life.

Liberal positions on the family that do accept liberalism as promoting ideals of the good life will be explored in the final part of this chapter and compared to the contemporary Aristotelian view of the family presented in the previous chapter. I will argue that liberalism lacks a genuine conception of the common good and is concerned more with collective or public goods. As a result, it cannot give a satisfactory account of what a well-functioning family life entails because the good family has to be more than a group of co-operative, mutually self-interested, autonomous individuals, each pursuing their own distinctive and separate conception of the good.

3.2 Rawls' approach to the family

I argued in the previous chapter that MacIntyre makes an important distinction between social practices, through which human beings pursue common goods constitutive of flourishing, and organisational institutions, designed to sustain those practices through the pursuit of goods external to the practice such as money, power and status. Rawls, on the other hand makes no such distinction. As Knight points out, Rawls used practices and institutions synonymously throughout his work (Knight 2008a, 230 f). Rawls defines a practice, early on in his writings on the principles of justice, as

> any form of activity specified by a system of rules which defines offices, roles, moves, penalties, defenses, and so on, and which gives the activity its structure. As examples one may think of games and rituals, trials and parliaments, markets and systems of property (Rawls 1958, 164 f).

His argument begins from the claim that justice is a 'virtue of social institutions or what I shall call practices' (1958, 164) and goes on to elaborate the system of practices into what he later calls the basic structure of society. For Rawls, if an institution is governed by just rules (which will be elaborated on below) then it will achieve its purpose of being advantageous to all those who participate and cooperate in it.

One of the advantages of MacIntyre's approach, against Rawls', is that the distinction between a practice and an institution allows us to distinguish between different types of ends – those worthwhile to human flourishing for their own sake and those which are merely instrumentally worthwhile because they enable us to achieve intrinsically worthwhile ends. For Rawls, all of these goods are not hierarchically ordered but instead are lumped together as goods which human beings might see as desirable for the sake of

their own chosen way of life. Within his basic structure some people may pursue wealth and status as an end in itself while others may pursue less egoistic and more altruistic ends. This distinction between ends is irrelevant to the principles of justice so long as no one who is less well off in the distribution of goods is not disadvantaged for the sake of someone more well off (though, if the other way round, inequalities of advantage may be more acceptable). While practices for Rawls are constituted by collectively intended rules for mutual advantage, for MacIntyre practices are not only constituted by collectively intended rules but 'by commonly intended goals and goods, and it is these goods that give point and purpose to the shared rules' (Knight 2014, 81).

For Rawls, moral principles or rules are not informed by a comprehensive conception of the good life because each person should be free to pursue their own conception of the good. The principles one accepts place restraints on one's interests and provides one with good reasons for limiting one's interests. Rawls argues that 'having a morality is analogous to having made a firm commitment in advance; for one must acknowledge the principles of morality even when to one's disadvantage' (Rawls 1958, 172–3). Thus moral principles are not constitutive means to achieving the good life but rather operate like constraining rules, which, if accepted through the participation in some practice or other, generate obligations that allow each party who benefits from the practice to weigh up their claims against one another in the design of the practice. Furthermore, what we expect from others we must also apply to ourselves so that we cannot unfairly advantage ourselves in the distribution of benefits and burdens. For Rawls, different parties come together to cooperate in a practice for mutually beneficial ends. The only inequalities that are permissible are those which are beneficial to the worst off and are those which are attached to offices, open to all, which will encourage those who take up the office to do the best job they can do. Rawls' approach is not teleological partly, he argues, because he offers a theory of justice which only applies to the basic structure of society (Rawls 1999). He argues that any conception of the good in a liberal democracy must not be pursued politically and that public institutions must remain neutral between conceptions of the good (Rawls 1993). Other liberals have questioned whether Rawls' theory is genuinely neutral, and I will return to this argument later. For now, I will consider how the family fits into Rawls' theoretical framework. Rawls' theory of justice does not entail that he denies that human beings do indeed pursue the good life but rather that he believes that

a comprehensive conception of the good life should not be pursued politically or imposed on one group by another.

The family is, according to Rawls, part of the basic structure of society. It is an institution which must have the principles of justice applied to it externally. However, the state must not interfere with it internally because that would entail interfering with private attitudes regarding what is a good life to live, and the state must remain neutral about such matters. This state neutrality between conceptions of the good means that the family must allow its members to choose their own conception of the good, but if a woman has freely chosen to be a housewife with no career, and to raise children while her husband goes out to work, then that is perfectly fine. What allows her to have that free choice is her rights as a married person to divorce, to win custody of her children in a court of law in the event of divorce, to vote and to have her own property. As such her husband is constrained and she is protected by the law enabling her to make a free choice about the kind of family life she wants to have and how she will weigh that up against her other commitments. Rawls assumes that in a just society, governed by the principles of justice as fairness, the family will also be just. To reiterate the core of his argument about morality, the rules which govern family life are not constitutive of the common good of family members but rather act as constraints on the individual members in pursuit of their own individual interests, which they sign up to in advance when entering into the practice. Entering into the practice and accepting constraints on one's actions is done because the practice itself is seen to be beneficial to all of its participants.

Rawls also takes it that the family, in some form, will be part of the basic structure of a well-ordered society. As such, parents have legitimate authority over their children at first and children are not in a position to question the propriety of parental injunctions. Rawls assumes that parental injunctions are justified because he is also assuming that the society from which the injunctions are derived is well-ordered. The 'veil of ignorance', from behind which he derives the principles, acts as an analytic device for justifying the rules of existing institutions, such as the family. Crucially he supposes that in time the child will come to love the parents 'only if they manifestly first love him' (Rawls 1999, 404). Recognition of this love leads the child to love in return but it is not, according to Rawls, a purely instrumental rational act, on the part of the child, in fulfilment of self-interested ends.

How does this love come about then? Rawls believes it is through the child associating his parents with his own successes and the sustaining of his world. If the parents are indeed worthy of esteem and follow the precepts set out for the child then the child will want to emulate them. But the child will also rebel at times because the injunctions seem arbitrary and go against his natural inclinations. However, if he does love and trust his parents, he will be more inclined to own up to his offences, seek reconciliation and 'in these various inclinations are manifested the feelings of (authority) guilt. Without these and related inclinations, feelings of guilt would not exist' (1999, 407). More importantly, however, Rawls argues that the absence of these inclinations would represent a lack of love for the parents. Thus one can infer that in this account of a child's moral development, children who do not love their parents will lack fear of disappointing their parents and of losing parental esteem. Children who do love their parents however, will want to not only continue to have their needs for love and affection satisfied but will want to go further and make their parents esteem them.

I dispute little in the part of Rawls' account which suggests that loving care from parents will bring out the best in children and that love for their parents in turn will lead children to want to act so to be esteemed by their parents. What might be added to this account is that parents also need to teach children, as they become older and more capable of understanding, why certain precepts should be followed and the moral purpose of their injunctions. The injunctions provided by parents surely ought to lack arbitrariness and not go against natural inclinations, as though one's nature is something to be suppressed and overcome, but rather help to control those inclinations and order them towards something better. Rawls' account implies that gaining a child's love and trust and thus successfully teaching them to follow injunctions is the means for teaching them to recognise legitimate authority. Moreover, he states that parents must be worthy of admiration for the child to love and admire them and to want to be like them, but he does not discuss what being a worthy object of admiration involves. Presumably parents must be just in that they have justifiable rules and do not exert unnecessary power over the child, instead treating her fairly. In this way the norms of a just society are supposedly transmitted (Morse 1999). However, Rawls has no account of the virtues and, because his approach leaves people to pursue their own interests, he does not allow room for discussion of the kinds of virtues which parents ought to possess in order to be worthy of admiration. Instead, being ruthless and competitive at work or angry and violent at home

might be seen as just as worthy as being just, generous, prudent and courageous. All are valid in a neutral political morality.

From an Aristotelian standpoint, good parents are not simply teaching their children to recognise and submit to an arbitrary moral authority but are teaching them how to live the best life they can and help others to do the same. Rawls may not disagree with the general idea that parents should teach their children to live the best life they can but would argue that whatever parents teach their children, it must be regulated by the principles of justice and it is these principles which need to be transmitted from one generation to the next. He also does not see the principles of justice as arbitrary because he argues that they are justified. They are justified on the grounds of an equal liberty for all. The principles of justice express our own ordinary sense of justice if we were able to discard the knowledge of our own position and status in society. Our sense of justice is expressed in our considered judgements (as opposed to those judgements made with little confidence or with hesitation). However, our considered judgments, formed under ideal circumstances, still may not accord exactly with principles formulated behind the veil of ignorance, hence the need for reflective equilibrium whereby 'a person has weighed various proposed conceptions and has either revised his judgments to accord with one of them or held fast to his initial convictions (and the corresponding conception)' (Rawls 1999, 43). Nonetheless, Rawls' discussion of moral theory and how our considered judgements are formed tends to focus on moral principles rather than ends and their causal power. From an Aristotelian perspective, the end which our judgement pertains to influences the considered judgment that we make. Rawls claims that the principles of justice are those most likely to be chosen in the original position compared with other traditional conceptions of justice provided by utilitarian or perfectionist accounts, and that the principles will accord more with our considered judgements on reflection than those other accounts.

 Rawls' argument entails that the family is just when the basic structure of society is just and that the principles of justice will be transmitted through parenting in just families. It may be that social arrangements have to be reformed and that 'rules should be set up so that men are led by their predominant interests to act in ways which further socially desirable ends' (Rawls 1999, 49). Thus the rules governing the family might be reformed to improve social justice and increase fair opportunity.

In fact Rawls goes so far as to raise the issue of whether or not the family ought to be abolished on the grounds that the family, in its partiality to its own members, might be problematic for the principles of justice which includes fair equality of opportunity (Rawls 1999, 64, 265). Rawls points out that

> The consistent application of the principle of fair opportunity requires us to view persons independently from the influences of their social position. But how far should this tendency be carried? It seems that even when fair opportunity (as it has been defined) is satisfied, the family will lead to unequal chances between individuals (Rawls 1999, 447–8).

Rawls claims that the logical implication of the fact that the family always leads to unequal chances between individuals is to abolish the institution of the family, but concedes that this is counterintuitive. He argues instead that the difference principle and the principles of fraternity and redress are to be given appropriate weight. For Rawls, the difference principle captures the 'natural meaning of fraternity: namely to the ideal of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off' (Rawls 1999, 90). The ideal family 'is one place where the principle of maximizing the sum of advantages is rejected' (Rawls 1999, 90). In other words, members of a family do not seek their own advantage unless it benefits the rest of the family. And while this ideal family is based on natural ties of sentiment, the difference principle is a moral principle which operates in the same way. Indeed, Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift similarly argue that, 'Parents may, indeed should, treat their children differently from other people's children, and in ways that tend to confer significant benefits and to generate significant inequalities between them and those others' (2009, 44). They argue, in support of Rawls' intuition, that one version of a non-parent-centred argument for parental rights is one which 'claims that the family is causally necessary for, if not itself constitutive of, a just society' (Brighouse and Swift 2006, 85). However, Brighouse and Swift's argument goes further than Rawls to say that not only is the family necessary for a just society – which makes familial partiality instrumental to a societal good – but it is also necessary for individual human flourishing. Thus the family, if realised in accordance with the principles of justice, is for Rawls an association which furthers socially desirable ends, transmitting a sense of justice which accords with the principles of justice from one generation to the next and internally benefitting individuals only insofar as that benefits the whole family. Rawls says nothing on unjust familial relations because he believes that

if the basic structure of society is made to be just then the family itself will be realised as a just institution.

3.3   Liberalism as a tradition

To talk of Rawls' approach as forming part of a tradition of liberal thinking seems to be counterintuitive when Rawls and other liberals hoped to free public life, and therefore our political commitments, from tradition. MacIntyre argues that

> the project of founding a form of social order in which individuals could emancipate themselves from the contingency and particularity of tradition by appealing to genuinely universal, tradition-independent norms was and is . . . the project of modern liberal, individualist society (MacIntyre 1988, 335).

However, for MacIntyre, any hope we may have for such a tradition-independent rational universality is an illusion. Liberalism itself, he argues, was transformed into a tradition of its own, by proscribing from the public sphere conceptions of the good that believe it is the duty of government to morally educate its citizens, and confining those conceptions to private belief. In doing so, liberalism necessarily endorses its own broad conception of the good. MacIntyre's characterisation of the individual who lives in such a liberal society is of a person who expresses their preferences publicly and has the means to bargain for the satisfaction of their own preferences. As there is no one overriding good, the individual pursues a range of goods in different compartmentalised spheres: 'political, economic, familial, artistic, athletic, scientific' and 'the preferences which he or she expresses will express this variety of social relationships' (1988, 337). Furthermore, as he demonstrates in *After Virtue* these different and disparate spheres of life form no coherent narrative unity through the cultivation of moral virtues. Instead, each sphere demands different capacities in order for the individual to do well in that sphere. Thus our work life is not informed by the virtues we cultivate in family life and instead we are praised for our efficiency, ruthlessness or conformity depending on what the activity demands and what the interests of our employers are.

Interestingly, MacIntyre also notes that Rawls equates the human self with the liberal self, claiming that to subordinate all of our aims to one overriding good strikes us as irrational or more likely mad. In doing so Rawls seems to contradict his own neutralism because his argument entails that the liberal self, pursuing different goods in different

spheres, regardless of any specific ordering of those goods, is the ideal self. The principles of justice, particularly those of distributive justice, MacIntyre claims, are simply rules for bargaining to satisfy our preferences. These rules 'set constraints on the bargaining process, so as to ensure access to it by those otherwise disadvantaged, and to protect individuals so that they may have freedom to express, and within limits, to implement their preferences' (1988, 337). Crucially, the concept of desert is irrelevant to justice, except in those associations that pursue their own private conception of the good, and, as such, the liberal account of justice is incompatible with Aristotelian accounts (1988, 338). Whereas, in Aristotelian thinking, one has to be just in order to be rational, MacIntyre claims that for the contemporary liberal individual, on the other hand, one has to first be rational so that 'the rules of justice may be justified by appeal to rationality' (1988, 342). Finally, therefore, MacIntyre concludes that

> The principles which inform such practical reasoning and the theory and practice of justice within such a polity are not neutral with respect to rival and conflicting theories of the good . . . they impose a particular conception of the good life . . . upon those who willingly or unwillingly accept the liberal procedures and the liberal terms of debate (1988, 345).

The problem MacIntyre identifies with liberalism's overriding conception of the good is that 'it can provide no compelling arguments in favour of its conception of the human good except by appeal to premises which collectively already presuppose that theory' (1988, 345). Rather than having a neutral starting point, liberal theory always begins with liberal premises and is best understood as 'an articulation of an historically developed and developing set of social institutions and forms of activity, that is, as the voice of a tradition' (1988, 345). Brian Barry also reaches a similar conclusion: 'that the only people who can be relied on to defend liberal institutions are liberals' (Barry 1990, 44). Barry means here that the arguments currently available to us to persuade people who are not liberals that they ought to subscribe to liberal institutions are flawed. As such, there can be little fruitful dialogue between the tradition of liberal thinking and other intellectual traditions.

3.4   Liberalism and the good

As stated in the introduction, not all liberals adopt neutralism when discussing conceptions of the good. Keat argues that, as well guaranteeing the conditions for

autonomy, 'political communities should also secure the institutional conditions for an extensive (but necessarily limited) range of valuable goods to be available to individuals' (Keat 2008, 251). Barry argues that this is how a liberal outlook might be fostered in a given society. For example,

> the kind of critical inquiring spirit valued by liberals will be aided by such things as subsidizing the dissemination of social scientific research that challenges existing prejudices and stereotypes by underwriting the costs of publishing books and the costs of producing plays that present new ways of looking at things (Barry 1990, 46).

However, for some liberals the grounds for determining which goods are valuable will not be liberal ones. Keat's conception applies the constraints of the principles of political liberalism to the way the state acts and, therefore, what possibilities they provide individuals with for living their lives. On the other hand, Richard Kraut accepts the need for moral pluralism which a liberal society affords, yet argues that we ought to defend a general but comprehensive conception of the good life (Kraut 1999).

Liberal perfectionists like Raz (1988) and Steven Wall (2006) agree that we should not be neutral between different conceptions of the good and that some goods which we see as valuable should be pursued and secured by the state. One example given by Raz is of marriage. He states:

> Perfectionist political action may be taken in support of social institutions which enjoy unanimous support in the community, in order to give them formal recognition, bring legal and administrative arrangements into line with them, facilitate their use by members of the community who wish to do so, and encourage the transmission of belief in their value to future generations. In many countries this is the significance of the legal recognition of monogamous marriage and prohibition of polygamy (Raz 1988, 161).

As such, perfectionist political action is not necessarily designed to impose one group's conception of the good on another but to secure valuable social institutions for the good of the whole community. Securing valuable social institutions, he argues, does not entail forcing a particular way of life on another person or group but rather making it available to them should they choose to avail themselves of it. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, autonomy is about securing a range of acceptable options; 'A person who has never had any significant choice, or was not aware of it, or never exercised choice in significant matters but simply drifted through life is not an autonomous person' (Raz

1988, 204). Raz claims that perfectionism is not incompatible with moral pluralism, arguing that a range of valuable forms of life, which may be incompatible with each other, can all be supported by perfectionist action through the state, while discouraging forms of life which might be damaging or harmful to society. The kind of support given to monogamous marriage does not mean that everyone should get married but rather that it is considered to be a valuable social institution which supports family life. It is what Raz calls a public or collective good because a person cannot get married on her own; she needs someone to marry and a culture and institutions which recognise marriage and consider it to be worthwhile. Furthermore, despite increasing numbers of people choosing not to get married, and cohabiting instead, such relationships tend to reflect or aspire to the values associated with marriage such as monogamy, commitment, trust and fidelity. By the state promoting marriage then, even though many couples may not avail themselves of the formal recognition (and many still do), a certain way of life is culturally recognised and endorsed.

Some contemporary liberal theorists are beginning to engage more directly in discussions of the family and are attempting to apply liberal principles to the intimate relations within the family, which Rawls supposes are natural ties of sentiment. The family is becoming central to moral and political debates rather than being an incidental feature of other discussions. A liberal perfectionist perspective, as opposed to neutralism, seems to be compatible with Brighouse and Swift's liberal view of the family. Their argument presupposes a view of the human good and the particular relationships which contribute to a flourishing life. One of these relationships is the relationship a parent has with her own child. As such, they provide a parent-centred justification for parental rights, to complement a child-centred justification (whereby a child has the right to be parented), in order to protect a relationship which they consider to be valuable to human beings as such, and, therefore, one which the state should not prevent unless the potential parent is likely to harm the child; for example, if they are a known paedophile or child-abuser. The state should, as a result, enable parental autonomy to act as the child's guardian, within obvious constraints (Brighouse and Swift 2006). What liberals arguing in this vein are doing is accepting liberalism as a tradition and arguing that liberal principles are worth defending. These principles, such as rights, duties and social justice, are the same principles that Rawls argues for but the perfectionist liberals tell a different justificatory

story, in which rights are instrumental to securing what liberals believe to be valuable for a human life, for society and its culture.

Furthermore, these post-Rawlsian liberals are questioning assumptions about the form of families and whether or not there is an ideal structure. In *The Family: A Liberal Defence* Archard provides an excellent summary of the principal changes to the family in modern times, which have dramatically transformed its character. He argues that one cannot deny these changes, whether or not one believes the family is in demise:

> The social position of women has changed: more women work and are thus not obviously restricted to the performance of a traditional domestic role; divorce has become easier at law; there has been a steady rise in the percentage of marriages that eventually break down, contributing to an increased number of lone parents and step-parents; the state has progressively assumed responsibility for the discharge of welfare and support services that would previously have fallen exclusively upon the family; the influence of religion upon society has weakened and in consequence, so has its influence upon such matters as the choice of sexual partners, marriage, and family structure; economic and other changes have reinforced the unwillingness of grown children to stay with their parents even after marriage (Archard 2010, xii).

Many of these changes, whether deemed good or bad, result from broadly liberal policies. Archard's assessment of the changing nature of the family looks specifically at the Western family since the industrial revolution. The idea that women traditionally occupied a domestic, caring role while men were breadwinners is a relatively recent development in Western conceptions of the family which emerged in the post-war period. The claim that the modern, nuclear, heterosexual family is natural, and therefore universal and timeless, is a fallacy. In pre-industrial society, before the formation of the middle classes, women were co-producers with their husbands and other family members. Even after industrialisation, working class women worked in factories alongside men and young children (Casey 1989; Coontz 1993; Coontz 2005). Nonetheless, the existence of family life in different guises has endured throughout history from wider kinship groups to the nuclear privatised family. It is precisely this instability in the social understanding of what a family is, which Veronique Munoz-Darde argues is evidence that the family is an enduring and meaningful social institution. In other words, 'the family strikes us as an immutable institution *because* it changes constantly' (1999, 55). The changes described by Archard do broadly represent real changes which have occurred in recent decades and they do potentially present challenges to not only how we

conceptualise family life but also to the stability of family life itself. Yet it is the family's adaptability to such changes throughout history, which makes it so enduring.

Whereas Rawls' description of a well-functioning family served to demonstrate the origins of legitimate authority, Archard's focus is on the family itself and what constitutes its good functioning. Archard argues explicitly that 'it helps to think of the family in functional terms: what it *does* rather than what it is' (2010, 9). He identifies the primary function of the family as the care, guidance and protection of children. A childless couple, therefore, do not amount to a family, even though they do constitute the foundations for family life:

> In the light of this essential functional role the family can be minimally defined *as a multigenerational group, normally stably co-habiting, whose adults take primary custodial responsibility for the dependent children* (2010, 10) [*original emphasis*].

While this minimal definition might have wider application than the nuclear family, it still rules out certain groups from the possibility of being considered a family, in particular married or co-habiting couples without children. Archard goes on to argue that we can then evaluate the plurality of family forms which exist within this definition in terms of how they succeed or fail in achieving the function of caring for, guiding and protecting children. Archard's use of the term function might sound Aristotelian, and to some extent it is in that it defines a good at which family life is directed. He also argues that the intrinsic goods attached to familial relationships outweigh the unequal distribution of material benefits and burdens between families because the family 'does such a decent job of transmitting adult morals, knowledge, aptitudes, and skills' (2010, 100). However, Archard believes this good can be secured with rights and liberties. The other problem with Archard's approach is that he reduces the family's function to child-rearing. In fact, what we end up with is a view of family life which only considers one stage – that of rearing children, and one set of relationships – the parent-child one. Similarly, Brighouse and Swift focus on the rights of parents and children and the value of this relationship without looking at the family as a whole and the value of familial relationships which extend over a lifetime. Discussion of the other functions of family life and the different relationships which constitute it would help us to see why families endure beyond children reaching maturity.

However, the strength of Archard's argument is that he claims that this way of defining the family avoids conflating a definition of the family with an ideal of the family. We might assume, however, that a good or ideal family would be one which carries out this function well. Thus, what Archard's definition actually seems to offer, is an ideal of the family that focuses on the good of family life, rather than prioritising considerations about family structure. Archard's argument might be translated into Aristotelian terms: that the function of the family is the care, guidance and protection of children and that in order for the family to contribute to a good life for human beings it must carry out this function well, that is, in accordance with the virtues and practical wisdom. While this function might well be fulfilled satisfactorily by a family with unjust or uncaring marital relations, the whole family is not likely to flourish under these circumstances and that will inevitably affect the proper care and protection of children. Therefore, when we talk about the flourishing of the family, we must consider more than this basic function.

What this wider view of the good of the family entails is that, in order to function well as a family member and to know what it means to be a good family member, one must acknowledge a common good of family life which informs one's own individual good. Yet as Brighouse and Swift note: 'Liberalism takes individuals to be the fundamental objects of moral concern and takes the primary attributions of rights to be to individuals over themselves' (Brighouse and Swift 2006, 81–2). For a liberal such as Archard to then suggest that there is a primary function to family life, and that if that function is not fulfilled then we can judge a family to be a bad one, is rather surprising. It is surprising because it appears to be offering a conception of the good of family life. This interpretation may be mistaken, however. If Archard follows Rawls, which he does to some extent, then moral rules act to restrain our individual interests and generate obligations on all those who benefit from the practice. Providing care, guidance and protection to children whom we are legally responsible for might simply require rules which we must follow in order to benefit as individuals from the practice of family life. Yet this claim suggests that we get something out of raising children that contributes to our own self-interested desires. Self-interestedness with regards to parenting may apply to some parents who take advantage of their children but in most cases it is in contributing to the good of the child, rather than our own good (in that we may put personal projects which previously satisfied us on hold) from which we derive fulfilment. Sacrificing our own projects for the good of another helpless human being also implies that there is a

greater good, which other goods are ordered towards. Brighouse and Swift argue that in order to justify the rights of parents and of children, one first has to substantively investigate the goods involved in the parent-child relationship and the family generally which make it so worthwhile and in need of protection with rights (2006; 2009). As such, rights become not ends in themselves but instrumental powers for the achievement of the good life of the family.

3.5   Conclusion

For the liberal, the fundamental object of moral concern is the individual and how individuals can live together cooperatively to achieve their own interests. Of course, there is not just one form of liberalism but many 'liberalisms' within the tradition which have conflicting and sometimes incommensurable ideas about the basis of morality (should it be right-based or obligation-based, for example). In this chapter, I have been concerned with the liberal neutralism espoused by Rawls and the liberal perfectionism put forward by Raz, Keat, Barry, Brighouse and Swift, among others. Both doctrines seem to be incommensurable with each other. However, if the individual is the fundamental object of moral concern, then we would expect most liberals, when it comes to the family, to be concerned with how the institution of the family enables its members to achieve their own individual interests. Furthermore, we should also be concerned about how the family distributes advantages in such a way that injustices are created.

For Rawls, we should not make any judgements about those interests. The liberal state ought only to ensure that the family operates within the constraints of the principles of justice and is able to transmit those principles from one generation to the next through the moral authority of the parents. However, for liberal perfectionists, some interests are more worthwhile than others and the liberal state ought to promote those collective goods which support worthwhile interests. Hence Raz's argument for state support of marriage, while at the same time not forcing couples to marry and allowing marriage to be dissolved if required. Some goods, however, are seen as so fundamental to everyone's interests that they are justifiably enforced by the liberal state, such as a free public education or a decent upbringing. For example, Archard argues that the primary function of the family is the care, guidance and protection of children. His concern is for the wellbeing of the child, to ensure that each child is provided with the minimum of what

he/she needs and has a decent range of acceptable options in order to pursue his/her interests as an adult. In other words, Archard sees the family as enabling children to grow into autonomous adults who are partial authors of their own lives. Brighouse and Swift, furthermore, argue that the relationship between the parent and child is worth protecting in itself because it contributes to the wellbeing of both.

Essentially though, both Rawlsian neutralists and liberal perfectionists are still primarily concerned with the individual and one's ability to pursue one's own individual interests – even though perfectionists might make a more Millian distinction between worthwhile and less worthwhile goods. Perfectionist liberalism acknowledges MacIntyre's claim that liberalism is a tradition with its own conception of the good life. However, that life is a compartmentalised one with different skills and character traits being valued in different spheres in which the individual operates. The compartmentalised individual might be an excellent pianist, a ruthless banker and a domineering father. For Rawls, a moral theory which informs political life must not pass judgement on this man's interests, as long as he operates within institutions that conform to the principles of justice. If they do then Rawls believes that the institutions themselves, including the family, will become just (though many liberal feminists, as we shall see in the next chapter, dispute this and argue that the family must first become just before the rest of society can).

For the perfectionist liberal, institutions should be arranged so as to promote the individual's best interests. Nonetheless, if the banker, who is also a father and a pianist, acts lawfully his ruthless pursuit of profit might be considered to be how this particular individual flourishes – because he is good at what he does and enjoys it. Is it relevant that his actions might be damaging to the common good? What about how his character in that role affects his character as a father? In the compartmentalised life of the modern individual, one can apparently change one's character from one sphere of life to the next, thus the latter question is not relevant to the liberal. As for the common good (and here is the crux of the argument), the good of the banker must be weighed against the public good. The common or public good for liberal perfectionism, as opposed to the kind of Aristotelianism defended in this thesis, can only be understood in terms of the aggregation of each individual interest. The public good, or the interests of wider society, weighed against the banker's interest is understood in terms of whether in pursuing his interests, he damages the ability of others to pursue their interests. In pursuing his

interests he might damage the public goods of autonomy or liberty. As such, there may be an argument for reforming the culture of banking. However, this view of the common good differs significantly from the Aristotelian view put forward in this thesis. For the Aristotelian, the common good is not the aggregation of individual interests. Nor can the common good be secured through the provision of rights via the institutions of the state. The common good informs the individual good and is found in common activity. What my interests are is educated by my socialisation into various social practices which begins with my family life. The common good is greater than its component parts and gives purpose and meaning to our activities. Thus, ensuring the continued good functioning of the family is not just important for the sake of equipping children to pursue their own individual interests as adults. It also introduces them to pursuing goods in common, to contributing to a sustaining network of giving and receiving and to the virtues of character required to live a good life in common with others, through all of our activities.

However, there is one aspect of liberal perfectionist thought, in particular that of Raz, which is worth further exploration from an Aristotelian perspective, and that is the concept of autonomy. For Raz, autonomy is the power of partial authorship over one's own life. This, he argues, does not necessarily entail individualism. To be autonomous is to be free from subjection, subordination and servitude. It therefore entails being an active participant in communal life, rather than a slave, a servant or someone who lives for another. The relevance of autonomy to our discussion of the family is clear; the flourishing family should not require any family member to live in servitude or to live for another – whether that other is a dependent child or an adult who requires care. For Raz we cannot have a right to autonomy because this would place too great a burden on others members of the society by holding them duty-bound to provide the necessary social environment for the right-holder to have a chance of an autonomous life. However, we can have rights to collective goods which contribute to an ideal of autonomy. I should want to argue that Raz is mistaken in holding that an autonomous life is the ultimate goal of human flourishing. Yet, the conditions for autonomy, in Raz's sense, might be necessary in order to secure the chance for practitioners to fully take part in social practices, rather than being subordinated or subjected to the power of others.

While the language of liberalism is concerned with concepts such as rights, duties, autonomy and liberty and it appeals to abstract principles as the basis of morality, the

language of MacIntyre's Aristotelianism offers a clear alternative to approach questions regarding the family and wider matters of social justice. Instead of rights as abstract concepts, MacIntyre's Aristotelianism allows us to think about rights as external goods, as powers which are instrumental to the achievement of intrinsically worthwhile human goods. For example, marriage rights for women to divorce and to hold on to their own property redistributes power within marital relations. Therefore, it will be argued that all families need some external goods such as power, money and status, not because of an appeal to an abstract principle created behind a veil of ignorance, but because without the right amount of external goods, families cannot flourish. Partial authorship over one's own life is therefore not good in itself, it cannot produce a flourishing life, but it can be instrumental to participation in a range of practices and is a form of power which can protect individuals from being subjugated or subordinated to the power of others.

4. Liberal Feminism and the Family

4.1 Introduction

Liberal or rights-based feminism, which grew out of the work of early liberal theorists such as John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft, builds on the premises of the liberal tradition but at the same time subverts many of the claims of liberalism. Furthermore, following the lead of Mill and Wollstonecraft, it addresses the family directly, through questioning the gendered division of labour and the public-private divide between politics and home life. Though it may be the case, as Susan Wendell notes, that 'it is somewhat artificial to be talking about liberal feminism' (1987, 65) because feminism has become increasingly pluralised in the questions it poses and the solutions it offers, it is also true that liberal feminism is an important foundational tradition in feminist thought. Feminism in general can be said to have gone beyond liberal feminism, and diversified, but it is nonetheless an important tradition for our discussion because it not only draws on but also critiques the liberal ideas explored in the previous chapter, and it raises questions about what genuinely flourishing families might look like if women were not subordinated.

Liberal feminism is not, as contemporary liberalism often is, committed to distinctions between the public and private or valuing the rational over the emotional. Liberal feminists recognise that the inequalities of the private sphere affect the status and power of women in the public sphere. While liberal feminism does take some important philosophical and political commitments from mainstream liberalism, such as equality of opportunity, liberty and personal autonomy as starting points, it attempts to apply these commitments as rigorously to the private sphere of family life. In this chapter I will examine whether liberal feminism is successful in its critique of mainstream contemporary liberal thinking, and whether or not it offers a viable alternative for understanding what a well-functioning family life entails. Liberal feminism, or feminist liberalism, attempts to use the tools and contested concepts of liberalism, such as justice and rights, to argue for greater equality between the sexes and more state support with regards to domestic responsibilities, child care and the right to work outside of the home. As such, it often seems to endorse a more perfectionist view of liberalism with feminist values at its core.

While it makes improvements to liberal thinking, I will argue that liberal feminism is still individualistic. This individualism and the striving for female liberation and autonomy was a necessary stage in Western feminist thought. In order to break down the barriers to female flourishing, women had to seize the concepts of rights and autonomy created by men for themselves. Arguably there is still a great deal of work to do and that it is only middle class white women who are truly 'liberated'. However, it cannot be the end point of feminism and this may explain the diversification of feminist thought and the fact that many have rejected liberal ideals. The focus on the individual woman and her ability to make free choices ignores the social embeddedness of the person and how her choices are shaped by reasoning within social contexts.

4.2 The problem with men's moral theories

Feminist readings of the Western canon pay attention to the particular experiences of women and reveal that the supposed gender-blindness of liberal theory in fact disguises and glosses over the actual problems and injustices faced by women, particularly with regards to family life. For example, Annette Baier identifies an interesting dilemma in what she terms 'men's moral theories' (though she specifically addresses contemporary liberal theories) with regards to parental obligation. She takes Rawls' *Theory of Justice* as an exemplary model of recent men's theories and argues that obligation is at the heart of most liberal moral theory. Baier describes Rawls' account of the conditions for the development of a sense of justice in children as sensitive, but she argues that he takes parental love as a given rather than a moral obligation. Thus while parents may have a moral obligation to teach their children truth-telling or promise-keeping, there is no mention of the obligation to be a *loving* parent. Baier thus takes this thought to its logical conclusion. She states that 'The virtue of being a *loving* parent must supplement the natural duties and the obligations of justice, if the just society is to last beyond the first generation' (Baier 1995, 6) thus parents tend to be good parents if they themselves had good parenting. If one does not think they can meet the obligation to be a loving parent then the troubling solution Baier arrives at is to avoid becoming a parent altogether either through contraception, sterilisation, or when contraception fails, abortion.

However, Baier recognises that no liberal moral theory is advocating obligatory sterilisation or abortion on the grounds of potentially failing to meet the obligation to be

a loving parent. Rather, her point illustrates the fact that liberal theories only escape this conclusion because they avoid the issue completely 'of what is to ensure that new members of a moral community do get the loving care they need to become morally competent persons' (1995, 7). Instead liberal theories rely on the assumptions of culturally encouraged norms about the natural maternal instinct and/or docility of women. Moral injunctions on the one hand are characterised as overcoming our nature, derived through an abstract practical reasoning, while on the other hand, the love of a parent (in particular, a mother) and how that love is directed at children is thought to be natural, requiring emotion and instinct, not reason. Baier argues that the 'liberal system would receive a nasty spanner in the works should women use their freedom of choice as regards abortion to choose *not* to abort, and then leave their newborn children on their fathers' doorsteps' claiming that this 'would test liberal morality's ability to provide for its own survival' (1995, 7). However, she notes that it may be argued in response that every moral theory must rely on some assumptions about human nature, as liberal theory does about self-interest, without this needing to be turned into moral obligation.

Baier cannot fully respond to this claim but goes on to argue that because liberal theory offers no moral guidance on issues which are clearly not matters of moral indifference such as 'whether to fight or not to fight [in the case of war], to have or not to have an abortion, or to be or not to be an unpaid maternal drudge', they are instead 'left to individual conscience' (1995, 8). Yet, the rational guidance of conscience is, surely, the object of ethics. Liberal morality relies on a constant supply of people who will choose to be self-sacrificial in the right way and fails to consider this kind of activity in a moral light. The idea that issues of whether or not to become a parent, when one is not even certain one can be a *good* parent, or whether or not to bear arms, when one is not sure whether the fight is for a just cause, are not moral issues, is problematic for liberal theories, which assume there is a constant supply of willing and self-sacrificing people, whatever the end. Baier is not a conventional liberal feminist but her point raises the question of whether or not liberal feminism can offer the necessary insight lacking in mainstream liberalism, which could provide solutions to the problem she identifies.

4.3 Feminist reconstructions of liberal ideals

Some feminists believe it is difficult to categorise feminism politically because, as Wendell argues,

> feminism has out-grown the political traditions from which it emerged, and . . . traditional political categories are no longer very useful for understanding the similarities and differences among feminist analyses, strategies and goals (1987, 65)

Despite these transformations, we do have a general idea about what is meant by *liberal* feminism and what it stands for. Generally speaking liberal feminism is concerned with women's rights and liberties, equality of opportunity, ending sex discrimination and asserting 'that the value of women as human beings is not instrumental to the welfare of men and children' (1987, 66). As such, many liberal feminists would accept the Kantian principle that every human being is an end in herself, not a means to another's ends. Thus liberal feminism strives for female moral and physical autonomy. These ideals are not confined to liberal feminism but they are essential to it.

Feminist thought has also drawn attention to the fact that the vast majority of caring labour throughout history has been done by women and that this work has often been exploitative. Caring and domestic labour has also been disregarded from moral thinking as a woman's natural duty or instinct and therefore outside of the concern of ethics and politics. Scott Coltrane notes that many studies of household labour separate that labour from its context and from parenting, household structure and market economies (Coltrane 2000; Coltrane 2010). Liberal feminists are not insensitive to this; though they tend to focus more on liberating women from domestic and caring labour and the legal changes that are needed to do this, than the moral value of such work. Nonetheless, some feminists such as Virginia Held, who emphasise the importance of social justice and the value of rights, have begun to focus more on the importance of care for social and political life. One purpose of focusing on liberal feminism in this chapter is to demonstrate how it differs from feminist care ethics, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Wendell also points out that the goals of liberal feminists are not incompatible with other forms of feminism such as socialist and radical feminism; for example, the redistribution of resources and equality of legal rights. However, this chapter deals primarily with feminists who bring together feminist and liberal ideas in order to transform liberalism so

that it responds to the issues that women face in the modern world, in particular their role in the family. Perhaps it is because of the fact that liberal feminism has already achieved many of its goals, in terms of changes to the law, which explains why feminism has outgrown its liberal roots. It now seeks more radical challenges to mainstream moral and political thinking, without completely abandoning its political aims for greater gender equality. Moreover, many women in developing world countries are now taking up some of the battles that liberal feminists have faced already in the West, such as women's entry into public life (Barlow and Akbarzadeh 2008).

4.3.1   Women's labour

Zillah Eisenstein argues that many people mistakenly believe that liberal feminism *is* feminism when actually it is one feminism among many; that it should be identified as a specific theory in order to avoid rendering other forms of feminism – socialist, lesbian, black, anarchist, etc. – as non-existent. Liberal, according to Eisenstein, refers to the historical sense: 'the specific set of ideas that developed with the bourgeois revolution asserting the importance and autonomy of the individual' (Eisenstein 1981, 4). These values which have their origins in the eighteenth century are now part of the dominant political ideology of Western society. She argues that although the liberal underpinnings of feminist theory are essential to the development of feminism, the patriarchal underpinnings of liberal theory are 'indispensable to liberalism' (1981, 5). It is this contradiction within liberal feminism that Eisenstein attempts to address. Despite the massive gains made by women into the public sphere and the fact that women now work outside of the home, Eisenstein argues that most married women who work, have to work a double-day (1981, 202; 1982, 568). Not only do they work in the labour market but they are also generally responsible for domestic labour and caregiving as well. As such, the public/private divide has not been brought down but rather women now inhabit, and juggle the demands of, both. She predicted that it would be the working woman's recognition of this sexual bias that would lead women to make feminist demands for 'affirmative action programs, equal pay, pregnancy disability payments, and abortion rights' (1982, 568–9). Despite rejecting many liberal assumptions Eisenstein still uses the language of liberalism in asserting feminist aims.

One of the major problems with the family for feminists, identified so well by Wendell, is that:

> Insofar as women's identities and interests are subordinated to the family and their relationships with men, men are able (and encouraged) to avoid taking equal responsibility for childcare, housework and other forms of service work, and for maintaining emotional relationships (Wendell 1987, 76).

It is not that feminists like Wendell and Eisenstein want to argue that most contemporary women reject these other-regarding roles and want to adopt more selfish, 'male' roles. It is rather that women are happy to do their fair share of domestic and caring labour as long as men are willing to undertake this activity as well (Prohaska and Zipp 2011). Thus it is the unequal distribution of unpaid labour in the family which seems unjust to feminists; particularly as many women actually work outside the home, as well as continuing to take most, if not all, of the responsibility for domestic labour and caregiving. For Eisenstein, the patriarchal bias of liberalism is that it defines women by their reproductive characteristics and that 'this reduction of woman to her biology is at the core of Western liberal ideology' (Eisenstein 1981, 14).

Feminists like Eisenstein, and also Anne Phillips, are particularly concerned with power structures and the artificial construction of public and private spheres. Phillips points out that the boundary between public and private is continually contested. Feminists and activists in the women's movement have drawn attention to issues as wide-ranging as domestic violence, the sexual division of housework, the objectification of women, and women in the workplace. Phillips argues, echoing the demands of the women's movement, that:

> The sexual division of labour and the sexual distribution of power are as much a part of politics as relations between classes or negotiations between nations, and what goes on in the kitchen and the bedroom cries out for political change (Phillips 1991, 92).

The focus on power relations is important; for one thing, domestic violence and rape are manifestations of male power over women (though there are of course exceptions which include female violence against men and rape of men by men, but these are less common in the West[15]). However, power does not always operate as one person exerting oppressive power over another. The role of the mother is historically a powerless role compared to that of the father. Even now, if a woman gives up work to look after her children, she is likely to become economically dependent on the father despite now

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[15] Official statistics in the UK suggest that the victims of the most serious offences of rape and sexual assault by penetration number around 85,000 women per year and 12,000 men (Office for National Statistics 2013, 6)

having property and voting rights. It is also more likely that *she* will give up work, or work part-time, because not only do men tend to earn more than women[16] but it is also not as socially acceptable for a mother to not be the primary caregiver. What this emphasises is the structural nature of patriarchal power in society.

Eisenstein borrows the concept of institutional motherhood from Adrienne Rich arguing that it reflects a political need of patriarchy to control and limit the choices of women. This is done through the power of political institutions, which control women's labour and reproductive capacities, through society's definition of women as mothers first and foremost. Eisenstein argues that patriarchal motherhood is a myth portrayed as a biological truth so that woman is transformed 'from a biological being (child-bearer) to a political being (child-rearer)' (Eisenstein 1981, 15). She argues that this patriarchal domination of women comes about from the necessity of society to reproduce itself. Since the women's movement began, more and more women have entered the workplace and some have even made it into the higher echelons of politics and boardrooms. Despite this, the dominant cultural norm is still that women are the natural caregivers and any woman who rejects motherhood in favour of political, social or economic wellbeing is often perceived to be abnormal in some way; as somehow deficient. On the other hand, if a man gives up work to become a stay-at-home father he is praised, for what is merely expected of women. Yet capitalism needs women in the workplace, seeing as they constitute half of the population, and the more people that work the more wealth is generated. However, as Eisenstein points out, this usually leads to women working the 'double-day' and taking on part-time or lower paid work so that they can also look after children and attend to other domestic duties. Some liberal feminist philosophers, such as Susan Moller Okin, have attempted to address the issue of gender injustice within the family by improving on Rawls' theory of justice, which will be discussed in the next section.

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[16] ONS data shows that between 1997 and 2013 the gap between the full time earnings of men and women has remained relatively consistent (at around £100 a week difference), though the gap has been closing in percentage terms due to a faster increase for women than men over this period (Bovill and Office for National Statistics 2014, 3–4). The data also shows that more women than men work part time, though the gap here is also closing (2014, 5).

4.4   Social justice in liberal feminist thought

As a result of the feminist critique of mainstream liberalism and Western normative assumptions in general, as well as the continued inequality of women in the home and the workplace, some feminists focus their attention on revising liberal thought to take account of gender inequality and make the family more just. The reason liberalism is revised rather than rejected is that these feminists believe liberalism still offers the best resources for feminism against theories which apparently, more robustly, subordinate women through appeals to a conservative conception of tradition. Okin focuses on adapting Rawlsian social justice to feminist thought in order to critique what she considers to be antiliberal theories that pose a threat to women's rights and autonomy. Her target is therefore not liberalism, though she is keen to modify modern liberal approaches, but rather pre-liberal and communitarian approaches to morality.

She argues that the unequal distribution of domestic labour and caregiving in contemporary life is not just detrimental to women but also to children, as well as social justice in general (Okin 1989a, 25). Okin's analysis of the treatment of the family in Western political thought, finds that standards of justice are deemed irrelevant to the sphere of family life, by many thinkers. Despite these thinkers providing differing justifications, she finds this trend of disregarding justice in the family in the work of Rousseau and Hume, as well as more contemporary antiliberal thinkers like Michael Sandel and Allan Bloom. Instead, for these thinkers, what she terms the 'nobler virtues' of love, affection, generosity and friendship, thought to be more natural bonds than justice, hold families together disregarding the need to guard against when these bonds fail. On the other hand, Okin defends Rawls as a liberal thinker who at least assumes, rather than explicitly argues, that the family in some form is just and that due to the fact he includes the family in the basic structure, 'he does not consider the family to be outside the circumstances of justice' (Okin, 1989a, 27) – though Archard argues that it is exactly this assumption by Rawls which side-steps the issue of the justice in the family.

Okin, following Rawls, argues that justice is the first virtue of social institutions because it is the most essential virtue, rather than because it is the most noble or elevated virtue. Justice in the liberal sense is thus a virtue of institutions rather than of moral character. Furthermore, she also accuses the aforementioned antiliberal thinkers, who focus on the higher moral virtues, of idealising the family. Okin, therefore, assumes that without a

conception of just relations underpinning the relationship between family members, families are not guaranteed to turn out in the idealised form where love and affection prevail. As such, I take her view to entail that a substantive conception of justice within the family, is required to protect against abuses of power and undo the damage caused by centuries of institutionalised patriarchal power.

Okin admits that in small communities or associations the moral virtues that often prevail are those of affection, generosity and others, which are superior to justice, and that narrow, individual self-interest often gives way to concern for common ends or the ends of those for whom we care deeply. Nevertheless, she claims, a foundation of justice is needed in case the nobler virtues do not prevail, and one person or more seeks their own ends at the expense of those others in the community. How does Okin envisage this foundation of justice within the family? Is it to be regulated by the state or some other public institution? If there is a particular injustice within a particular family or widespread injustice within the family more broadly conceived, how does society bring about justice? For Okin it is brought about through laws, through promoting and enforcing women's rights and through the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of family life. She argues that to leave it to the nobler virtues is unrealistic and that, for example,

> even if wives never had occasion to ask for their just share of the family property, due to the generosity and spontaneous affection of their husbands, we would be unable to assess the families in which they lived from a moral point of view unless we knew whether, if they did ask for it, they would be considered entitled to it (1989a, 30-1).

Here she echoes Mill's claim that although many men do not treat their wives as property and may even treat them as equals, perhaps out of spontaneous affection, without changes to equalise women's rights with men's, there will always be men who *do not* treat their wives as equals. Okin does not accept that natural justice may be brought about through the reliance on nobler virtues; through friendship and generosity between members of the same family. Rather, there needs to be evidence that the principles of justice will apply if friendship and generosity are lacking. Reliance on the nobler virtues and enlarged affections between family members infers a highly idealised view of the contemporary family, according to Okin, which completely ignores the extent of violence perpetrated within the family. It also ignores the importance of family as a sphere of distribution. In truth, Okin believes that systematic injustice can occur in the family due to the fact that 'the socialization and role expectations of women mean that they are

generally more inclined than men . . . to order their priorities in accordance with the needs of their families' (1989a, 31). However, from the Aristotelian perspective proposed in this thesis, if a small community or association such as the family does not cultivate these virtues, and if its members do not treat each other with justice, then it is not a flourishing social practice and therefore we should not try to artificially prop it up with abstract principles which restrain individual interests. If the other virtues are non-existent then surely the practice is unsustainable and ought to be transformed or dissolved? Laws can be put in place to protect the civil rights of family members, such that they do not find themselves trapped or subordinated, without appealing to abstract principles of justice. When the 'nobler virtues' are non-existent then all that is left is the pursuit of external goods like power and status. Laws protecting civil rights redistribute power so that people can escape becoming subordinated or trapped in small oppressive communities or associations. The failure of the virtues within the family and the resulting familial dysfunction will be discussed in a later chapter.

Okin is not only critical of the reliance on the 'nobler virtues'; she also specifically targets MacIntyre for his appeals to tradition. She erroneously interprets these appeals to tradition as though MacIntyre is some sort of Burkean conservative traditionalist by equating his use of the term with adverts in *Good Housekeeping* glorifying the traditional woman and political campaigns which appeal to 'traditional values' (1989a, 41). Okin argues that the approach of appealing to traditions or 'shared understandings' is 'incapable of dealing with the problem of the effects of *social domination* on beliefs and understandings' (1989a, 43) [*original emphasis*]. As a result, Okin warns feminists who see communitarians as allies 'in their struggle against what they see as a masculinist abstraction and emphasis on justice, impartiality, and universality' (1989a, 43) against such alliances. Despite her in depth analysis of both *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Okin still does not seem to recognise MacIntyre's radically different use of the term tradition and the conceptual tools he provides in *After Virtue* for dealing with the problem of the effects of social domination on beliefs and understanding. She accuses him of elitism for appealing to Aristotle without acknowledging how he develops and sociologises the Aristotelian tradition to include a range of non-elitist productive and practical activities which contribute to a flourishing human life.

On the other hand, in her critique of Rawls, Okin insightfully points out that Rawls' entire theory rests on the belief that the family, which is crucial to individual moral development, will teach us to have a sense of justice and simply assumes that families are just. For Rawls, it is through the family that the principles of justice are transmitted. He does not, however, discuss what happens when families are unjust. He simply takes it as a given that they are, if the wider society is justly ordered. Of course, Rawls only claims to provide a partial theory of justice, which applies to the basic structure of society, but given that the family is an institution considered by Rawls to be a part of that basic structure, it would surely follow that it is subjected to moral scrutiny in the same way as other institutions; perhaps more so given that it is not voluntary for all members of the family. Okin thus asks Rawls:

> Unless they are parented equally by adults of both sexes, how will children of both sexes come to develop a sufficiently similar and well-rounded moral psychology as to enable them to engage in the kind of deliberation about justice that is exemplified in the original position? (Okin 1989b, 237).

In other words, Okin believes that the unequal division of labour along gendered lines within the family will distort the views of children as they develop into adults, making it difficult for them to reason well about the concerns of justice.

Iris Marion Young, though not a liberal feminist as such, is similarly critical of the assumption in liberal thought that the family is just. She points out that some liberal thinkers such as William Galston (part of the New Familialists) argue explicitly that the two-parent family should be privileged by the state because the breakdown of this stable family structure leads to social ills such as increased poverty, crime, high-school dropouts and drug-taking (Young 1995). Despite the fact that Galston claims he is in favour of gender equality and women's rights, Young believes that his lack of analysis of gender inequality and male domination within the family leads to him advocating the subordination of wives to their husbands, for the sake of nurturing independence in their children; independence being the paragon virtue of liberal society and its nurturing only achievable by two parent families (Galston 1993). Young states,

> Galston would surely deny that he intends that mothers should subordinate themselves to men. But in the absence of explicit consideration of gender inequalities in earning power and household division of labour, preferring stable marriage over divorce and single motherhood amounts to calling for mothers to depend on men to keep

them out of poverty, and this entails subordination in many cases (1995, 545).

As both Young and Okin attempt to show, contemporary liberal thinkers make assumptions about the family as a just institution without further explanation and antiliberal thinkers assume that the higher virtues will exist in loving relationships bringing about natural justice. They do not, according to these feminists, address the potential for exploitation in families, due to unequal structural power relations, or question the dominant ideal of the nuclear family, which leaves women vulnerable to dependency and exploitation.

4.5   Re-constructing Rawlsian social justice through the capabilities approach

Martha Nussbaum, like Okin, is highly critical of both Rawls' assumptions about justice in the family and of the privileging of any type of family structure over another. Similarly to Archard, she argues that the conventional family of a particular culture may not be the best model of family for promoting the capabilities one needs to lead a good life. Also, like Archard and some other liberal thinkers discussed in the previous chapter, thanks to her earlier Aristotelianism (Nussbaum 1992), she is in many ways a perfectionist liberal, though she argues she does not provide a comprehensive conception of the good because she is committed to political, rather than comprehensive, liberalism (2000, 180).

Nussbaum contends that Rawls assumes that the family is prepolitical and, therefore, 'natural', which is problematic for his theory of justice. For Rawls the family forms part of the basic structure of society and this much Nussbaum, along with Okin, agrees with Rawls on. Yet in *A Theory of Justice* heads of households are envisioned in the Original Position behind the veil of ignorance, which suggests that households exist prior to the construction of society; despite the fact that the veil of ignorance is supposed to prevent hypothetical members of a given society from knowing their position in that society (Rawls 1999). According to Nussbaum, Rawls and others in Western philosophy rely on underlying assumptions about what the best or typical family might be in a given society, without questioning these assumptions. As the Original Position is ahistorical, Nussbaum argues, we are led to assume that a particularly conventional form of the family (in Rawls' case a private patriarchal nuclear family because heads of households are usually men) is

biologically natural rather than a socially constructed institution. Okin's solution to this is to

> discard the "heads of families" assumption in Rawls' thesis, take seriously the notion that those in the original position are ignorant of their sex as well as their other individual characteristics, and apply the principles of justice to the gender structure and the family arrangements of our society (Okin 1989b, 235).

However, this would radically alter Rawls' theory, which in general neglects the issue of gender. Furthermore, keeping the rest of Rawls' assumptions intact does not provide a critique of the assumption that the private nuclear family is best.

In her work *Sex and Social Justice* Nussbaum puts forward a social constructionist argument that gender roles and the private nuclear family are in many respects artefacts of human arrangements rather than 'natural' as they are often taken to be (Nussbaum 1999). As such, she erects a somewhat artificial line between nature and custom, which ought to be rejected from an Aristotelian perspective. However, Nussbaum argues that ideas about natural female traits, for example that women are naturally dependent and are meant to serve the interests of men, or that they are naturally suited to caring roles because they are more empathetic and maternal, are ideas that are common historically but also change from one cultural context to another. Therefore, when one invokes nature to justify the place of women in a given society, Nussbaum argues that it is usually in order to justify a custom within a tradition or a societal norm, and often is not reliably grounded in biological facts. Echoing Mill's sentiments about custom and convention, she argues that 'clearly the longevity of a custom does not show that it is right' (Nussbaum 2000, 254). Equally, the mere fact of a biological tendency, the idea that it is rooted in human nature, for Nussbaum does not lead to its rightness or inevitability. Her claim here is particularly strong when we consider that it is a general consensus in modern liberal thought that we are rational beings who are able to take control of our biological nature. If liberals accept that, then why do they rely on claims of naturalness to justify continuing gendered social relations?

Nussbaum argues that it is utterly implausible to even think that the family has a fixed customary nature, let alone a biological one, maintaining that the norms of family structures change historically and culturally. In some cultures, for example, families consist of large kinship groups living together, or are ruled over by matriarchs. Though

Nussbaum admits that these arguments are not new to feminism, she argues that they have not been addressed in any significant way by theories of justice in the liberal tradition (Nussbaum 2000, 252).

Family life and emotional wellbeing are clearly important in Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach as Nussbaum considers both 'emotions' and 'affiliation' to be capacities which must be secured in order for a human life to have the overall capability to function (Nussbaum 2000; Nussbaum 2011). Therefore, her argument is not to liberate women from the family or to eradicate the family but to defend an almost indefinite plurality of family forms and oppose the claim that any given form of family life is natural. In doing so she asserts that the normative family of liberal political theory is constructed by customs and institutions and is not in any way natural.

However, her social constructionist critique of liberal theories and institutions appears to be at odds with her capabilities approach which sees the family as a home for love and care which nurtures our capacities for emotion and affiliation. Her approach rests on the assumption that the family has a natural basis, at least in part, because it contributes to human flourishing. Is she able to resolve this tension? Nussbaum recognises that there may be some biological tendencies such as the need for emotional support which might only be satisfied through affiliative groupings (Nussbaum 2000, 261).   She also puts forward a normative view of the family which sees families as homes for love and care that are part of the human capabilities, but she argues that 'they are also shaped at a very deep level by our conceptions of sex roles, sexual desirability, and the aims of sexual activity' (Nussbaum 1999, 272).   She also takes it that culture has a role to play in constructing what it is to be male or female and what it is to experience different emotions, such as love and grief, so it naturally follows from her argument that 'what we naively refer to as "*the* family" is a highly various group of social constructs' (1999, 272). These social constructs are a result of the natural desire for love and care, which in turn are shaped by social expectation, and the need to nurture the young and dependent. The divide between custom and nature suddenly seems less distinct when the capabilities approach is introduced. Nussbaum's positive conclusion, then, is that there is no ideal type of family. Her definition of family amounts to little more than small affiliative groupings including women's collectives or other forms of communal living which do not conform to the Western norm of a family. Nussbaum almost seems to be advocating

something akin to Mill's 'experiments in living' but with more attention to developing caring and loving affiliations rather than purely individual self-development.

Nussbaum's critique of the state in Western society is that it only gives recognition and protection to the contemporary private nuclear family without questioning whether other affiliative groupings require such protection. While Nussbaum accuses Rawls of assuming that the nuclear family is biologically naturally, she also claims that Rawls treats the family as if it is a voluntary grouping comparable to universities and churches, which, he argues, should not be interfered with internally but simply restrained externally by the principles of justice, in order to protect individual liberty. Yet the family, Nussbaum argues, is far from voluntary for children and often is not for women either, particularly when some women are economically dependent on men and have no choice but to stay in the family unit (Nussbaum 2000, 276).   Nussbaum, in contrast to Rawls, wants to protect not only individual liberty but also the range of capabilities she believes make us fully human. She concludes that the family can both foster and undermine the capabilities so it is up to the law to make sure it does more fostering (2000, 270). Following Rawls, she argues that the basic structure is essentially how the major institutions of a society work together to assign rights and obligations and distribute goods of advantage that come about through social cooperation. However, for Nussbaum they should do more than distribute material goods; they should also protect individual capabilities for flourishing. If the family, as one of the major institutions in Nussbaum's conception, inhibits rather than promotes an individual's capabilities and thus prevents her from flourishing, then the state should take an interest in this and look to what it can do to address it. On the other hand, it would not be up to the state to force an individual to exercise their capabilities in order to make them flourish as this would sacrifice individual liberty. Nussbaum's capabilities approach does assume a conception of the good life for human beings in a similar way to other liberal perfectionists. We may recall that Raz argues we should make available those institutions and practices which contribute to human flourishing, such as marriage because it can create a more stable family life, without forcing any individual to avail themselves of it. In doing so Nussbaum makes assumptions about what is good for human beings and thus about their nature. Again there seems to be a conflict between her capabilities approach and her social constructionism.

For Nussbaum, the Rawlsian belief that the state only regulates the family from the outside as it does other institutions, such as churches and universities, through its legal definition of marital union and various protections it gives to certain familial groupings, is also flawed. There are many ways in which the liberal state interferes with the internal life of the family through an array of institutions. For example, social services and child protection authorities in the UK take children into care when they deem parents not capable of providing adequate care themselves. Nussbaum's approach, in contrast, makes central to her thesis the difference between universities and religious institutions, on the one hand, and family, on the other. What family we are part of is certainly not voluntary, at least until we choose our partner. Rather than giving priority to one affiliative grouping such as the Western ideal of the private nuclear family unit, Nussbaum wants to begin with each individual's capabilities and liberties with the aim of seeing how different groupings of persons succeed or fail in promoting these capabilities (Nussbaum 2000, 276–7). This approach also parallels Archard's methodology which, as discussed in the previous chapter, aims to evaluate different familial arrangements on how it succeeds or fails in fulfilling the function of family life. Both approaches aim at a minimal definition of the family so that different family forms can be evaluated according to certain criteria.

Through her empirical research in Kerala, India, Nussbaum concluded that women's collectives might be more successful at promoting the capabilities for women than the traditional form of familial groupings found in those societies. In the traditional form of Indian family, for example, Nussbaum found that women were exploited and treated as possessions through the custom of dowry (despite dowry being illegal) and that many suffered domestic abuse. For these women, the family in these societies was certainly not a voluntary association. She emphasises that certain capabilities need special attention within a family such as the need for love and care, reproduction, support and education. As well as these capabilities which need special attention within the family, it must also support a wide range of 'associational liberties' such as the capability to exercise choice and the liberty of self-definition. These particular capabilities, however, must only be promoted within the constraints of the central capabilities which she argues should be built into whatever legal structure regulates the family. So love and care, Nussbaum argues, should not come at the expense of personal liberty. Nussbaum then wants to look at different affiliative groupings which might resemble family i.e. they promote the capabilities of love and care but not at the expense of individual rights, and

then give those groupings the same state protection afforded traditional family groupings. She is not, therefore, arguing for the withdrawal of state interference in family life but instead seems to argue for increasing its activity, as well as recognition in theories of justice that the state does and should interfere with family life on a more inclusive basis. Nussbaum's claims rest on the premise that the family is part of the basic structure of society, as Rawls asserts, but goes further than Rawls to say that because of this fact, it is among those institutions that the basic principles of justice are designed to regulate internally. The family is part of the basic structure because of the profound influence it has on the individual's development and life chances from the start of a human life. Yet she still insists that the values of personal choice may end up being sacrificed if the family were to be completely regulated by a theory of political justice, hence the need for some recognition of individual sovereignty.

Like other liberals, and other liberal feminists, Nussbaum understands the family as a sphere of human life which satisfies certain aspects of human need, and she therefore shies away from a more comprehensive and cohesive view of flourishing in which family life is fully integrated into our conception of the good life. Family appears to be a means to individual flourishing (even if it is intrinsically worthwhile) rather than a form of community or a practice whose common good informs our own conception of the good life. Nussbaum's capabilities approach is based on intuition in that the list of capabilities is supposedly intuited rather than enjoining a particular view of the person or of human nature. Without a particular view of human nature then it is difficult to say where these intuitions about the capabilities we need to flourish come from or even what our biological tendencies as human animals are. It is difficult to universalise human capabilities if there is no agreement on human nature and what constitutes a good life. Nussbaum's claim that the capabilities are intuited seems implausible therefore because they do indeed presuppose a view of the person. The fact she denies this seems to be simply because it would invalidate her commitment to political rather than comprehensive liberalism. She therefore seems to take Rawls' emphasis on a certain degree of neutralism seriously but struggles to justify it.

4.6 Conclusion

Liberal feminist thought, or feminist reconstructions of liberal ideas, highlight the barriers to social justice and equality in liberal conceptions of the family. These feminists point out the inherent problem with how much of liberal thought makes assumptions about the family, either with regards to it being just or with regards to its naturalness. Using liberal concepts such as justice, rights and autonomy *against* liberal assumptions about the family, feminists highlight the endemic injustice of familial relations throughout history and still apparent today. What they show us is that certain types of family structure are unjust and inimical to the flourishing of women, and often children, because of the fact that this injustice is transmitted to the next generation through families. Furthermore, these family structures are often valorised by theorists as natural and therefore the best forms of the family. Reliance on the spontaneous affections of spouses and the noble virtues of generosity and friendship, it is argued, is not sufficient to protect women from abuses of power when family life is so often characterised by unequal power relations.

Nussbaum rightly highlights the role culture and society play in shaping gender roles, the meaning and significance of emotions, and the norms of family organisation (1999; 2000). Aristotle does not seem to recognise this when he claims that women, workers and slaves are naturally inferior to the male citizens of the *polis*. MacIntyre looks to Aristotle as a philosopher who recognised our vulnerability and animality. Yet even MacIntyre argues that Aristotle did not give weight to the experience of those most likely to have to deal with the facts of affliction and dependence such as 'women, slaves, and servants, those engaged in the productive labour of farmers, fishing crews, and manufacture' (MacIntyre 1999, 6). Aristotle's own failure to recognise the extent of human dependence and vulnerability, particularly of these groups, may go some way to explaining why he excludes these groups from shared deliberation on important matters. Those who participated in such deliberation were men of the leisured, higher echelons of society who were economically independent. Women, slaves and workers however were economically dependent, entirely subservient or dependent on one another. Moreover, Aristotle's virtuous man is magnanimous and likes to be recognised for what he has given but does not want to be reminded of his need for aid from others. He is not someone who asks for help. This is something which feminist theory can rectify without too much damage to Aristotelian premises.

However, Okin's critical discussion of the virtues is problematic. She argues that the nobler virtues of love, affection, generosity and friendship are considered to be natural by their proponents and therefore provide a stronger basis on which to build family life. However, no virtue is natural to a human being (and it is debatable that love is a virtue, as opposed to a passion or emotion). We may have natural capacities but virtues of character need to be cultivated through moral education and habituation. Similarly, justice does not come about naturally (except perhaps within a flourishing friendship) but must be cultivated and enforced by laws or the rules of a practice. The rules of a practice, for example, provide the standards of excellence against which we can compare our own actions. However, rules are not abstract but directed towards the common good of the practice, which in itself is ordered towards the human good of *eudaimonia.* If half of the human population are prevented from proper flourishing as a partial result of the way in which a particular practice is ordered, then that practice must be dysfunctional. The way the practice is ordered must promote and cultivate justice, as well as the other virtues. Thus a widely dysfunctional practice needs to be radically transformed. Women in the past century and even earlier began this process through the questioning of conventional familial arrangements through cultural and political engagement, through participation in the women's liberation movement, among other radical activities. In doing so they raised questions in the political sphere from the perspective of women in the private sphere, which had previously been considered outside of political concern, such as what a genuinely flourishing family life might look like.

One further issue raised by feminists that the Aristotelian approach adopted in this thesis needs to accommodate is that, due to the role expectations placed on women, they are generally more inclined than men to order their priorities in accordance with the needs of their family; either due to the demands of family life and women's socialisation into gendered norms or due to their experiences of the workplace, in that women's work life is more negatively impacted by family life than is men's (Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996; Keene and Reynolds 2005). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that in dual-career families, there is little difference between the genders in terms of prioritising the family over career goals (Schnittger and Bird 1990). As such, when we talk about being able to hierarchically order goods in accordance with practical reason, we must not ignore gendered role expectations and the demands of parenthood or the differing effects on the genders in work life. To do so would be to divorce practical reasoning from the social

and cultural contexts which shape that reasoning. Furthermore, one of the coping mechanisms of parents who work is to compartmentalise the different parts of their lives. As such the goods of each sphere are not clearly ordered in relation to each other.

Despite women's immense advances in the public sphere from the time when John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft and the women's suffrage movement began to advocate for women's rights, the majority of caring and domestic work is still done by women who often work a 'double-day' in order to juggle the demands of both, while men have made few advances in the private sphere in terms of sharing the burden of domestic and caring work. Furthermore, liberal feminism has, as Hagar Kotef points out, been criticised by scholars such as bell hooks (1982) and Hazel Carby (1987) for its attempt to universalise the particular; the particular of the white middle-class woman (Kotef 2009, 495). The abstractness that liberal feminism necessarily embraces, Kotef argues, was an attempt to stabilise the category of woman. The more concrete 'woman' becomes, the more unstable because of the intersectionality of oppression – there becomes no stable universal category of woman, only different groups of women (Kotef, 2009, p 518-9). Care ethics, which I will explore in the next chapter, attempts to reject the abstract and focus on the particularity of embodied care; though it will become clear that some who write about care ethics still seek to universalise norms and rules of care, drawing on the liberal analytic approach to ethics.

Liberal feminist theory poses the question of how women would fare in genuinely flourishing families and lays some groundwork for how that might be brought about through further state interference in family life. It does not, however, tell us what a flourishing family life entails. Nussbaum does begin to address this with her capabilities approach by suggesting that families must foster certain capacities and that the society must ensure that families do foster these capacities, without forcing individuals to realise them. However, her minimal yet all-encompassing definition of what a family is, which includes other forms of communal living, may not be as helpful to the aims of this thesis as it first appears. It seems to me that her example of women's collectives in India is a much needed response to the failure and breakdown of family life in India, rather than just another form of the family. Dysfunctional families might be able to learn something from these collectives and affiliative groupings; however, the collectives themselves do not fulfil all of the functions of a flourishing family life.

5. Care Ethics and the Family

5.1   Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, many feminist theorists, particularly liberal feminists, have been critical of mainstream liberal assumptions about the family, challenging liberal theory to extend its own principles to women, instead of disguising inequality with gender-neutral language. These feminists have argued for a number of women's rights in relation to the family, such as flexible working and an equitable division of domestic labour and care. Nonetheless, there is still variation and disagreement within feminist theory about what is good for women and for families and if the two can ever be reconciled. Feminist care ethics, a more recent development in feminist thinking, focuses less on women's rights and autonomy and more on recognition of the ethical and social importance of caring labour, usually done by women, to wider society. Feminist care ethics emphasises human vulnerability and dependency and claims that care is at least as important for moral theory as social justice. However, theorists disagree on whether or not care ethics constitutes a standalone theory or requires the wider framework of other moral theories such as liberalism or virtue ethics (Held 2005; Slote 2007). They also argue about the extent to which caring work should be the responsibility of families or the state (Bubeck 2002; Bubeck 1995). In this chapter I will explore some of these debates and their relevance to the question of what a flourishing family is. In the following chapter, I will argue for a synthesis of the Aristotelian approach defended in this thesis with feminists care ethics in order to provide a comprehensive view of what constitutes a flourishing family life.

Many care ethics feminists have gone further than Okin and Nussbaum's critique of liberal assumptions about the family, to largely reject many aspects of liberal theory because of its dependence on abstract justice reasoning and the ideal of the self-sufficient individual. They argue that a liberal approach to moral thinking ignores the extensive power of caring relationships, particularly in the family, in shaping the individual. They argue that the individual should not be understood as self-sufficient but rather as dependent on others and as depended on *by* others. Instead of reforming liberal theory, care ethics has attempted to expound a different theoretical approach derived from the traditional, particular experiences of women and focused on the ethics of

caregiving. Furthermore, much of care ethics theory is premised on the idea that the mother-child relationship, or the relationship between a carer and cared-for, is a paradigm for all moral relationships. What constitutes a flourishing family life, therefore, has to be important for understanding moral relationships in general.

Care ethics theory is now only a few decades old and, as such, many of its advocates argue that it is not yet a fully formed moral or political theory which stands on its own. In fact, as Virginia Held points out,

> Some advocates of the ethics of care resist generalizing this approach into something that can be fitted into the form of a moral theory. They see it as a mosaic of insights and value the way it is sensitive to contextual nuance and particular narratives rather than making the abstract and universal claims of more familiar moral theories (2005, 9).

On the other hand, many ethics of care theorists still rely on some of the premises of liberal theory, such as the need for basic social justice and rights. More central to the idea of an ethics of care, though, is meeting the needs of dependent others for whom we find ourselves responsible as parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and strangers. This focus on caring work and the needs of others has led to other feminists criticising certain care ethicists for gender essentialism and reinforcing traditional sexist roles (see Card 1990; Hoagland 1990; Houston 1990; Tronto 1993). In this chapter I will explore the scope and limitations of care ethics for answering the question posed in this thesis. Its insights can help us to reconstruct our approach to ethics and develop a perspective on the good of family life which recognises the inherent moral problems of caring relationships. Though care ethics now extends well beyond the spheres of friendship and family, to law, politics, society and international relations (for example, see, DesAutels and Whisnant 2010; Held 2005; Tronto 1993), for the purposes of this thesis I will focus primarily on its applications to family life.

5.2 The care perspective in moral development

Carol Gilligan, a former collaborator of the moral psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, is one of the originators of the care ethics perspective. Kohlberg's research focussed on moral development from childhood to adulthood. However, as Gilligan points out, in the study, which he used to determine the six stages humans go through in the development of their moral judgement, Kohlberg failed to include girls. When he then tried to locate

women on the scale of moral development he found that they exemplified the third stage of development, not the most advanced stage. According to Gilligan, 'at this stage morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others' (1993, 18). Kohlberg considered this conception of goodness to be functional in mature women's lives and that

> only if women enter the traditional arena of male activity will they recognize the inadequacy of this moral perspective and progress like men towards higher stages where relationships are subordinated to rules (stage four) and rules to universal principles of justice (stages five and six) (Gilligan 1993, 18).

There are a number of glaring deficiencies, which Gilligan notes, both in Kohlberg's method and the conclusions he draws. Kohlberg concludes that female morality is lacking, even though his claims to universalisability are undermined by the study's omission of girls. He also fails to consider the possibility that this so-called female morality might be superior, or at least complementary, to so-called male morality. Nor does he consider that another explanation might be that men, on the whole, reject the kind of morality which privileges relationships over rules because they do not generally share with women in the care of dependents, and have thus adopted the language of rights and rule-following, which dominates public life. While the experience of men is arguably changing so that there are increasing numbers of male carers and fathers who take an active role in caregiving (particularly in dual-earner families and families where economic instability has pushed men into 'at-home fatherhood' (Chesley 2011)), the fact that public life is still dominated by men and that many women work a 'double-day' (as argued in the previous chapter) suggests that it is still the case that most men are not involved in direct caregiving. If the difference in moral reasoning is a reflection of the particular gendered experiences of men and women, then it is clear that Kohlberg does not see traditional women's work as of equal moral value to traditional men's work. The contradiction of this claim lies at the core of the care ethics critique.

Owen Flanagan and Kathryn Jackson argue that Kohlberg envisaged the morally good person as 'simply one who reasons with, and acts on the basis of, principles of justice as fairness' (1987, 623), the core concept of John Rawls' moral philosophy. However, Gilligan rejects Kohlberg's approach to moral psychology with its exclusive focus on justice reasoning. Instead she expounds the idea that,

> Whereas justice as fairness involves seeing others thinly, as worthy of respect purely by virtue of common humanity, morally good caring requires seeing others thickly, as constituted by their particular human face, their particular psychological and social self. It also involves taking seriously, or at least being moved by, one's particular connection to the other (1987, 623).

According to Gilligan women tend to find their moral obligations in the needs of particular others – children, or sick or elderly relatives – for whom they find themselves responsible. This is not a biologically deterministic claim, as some feminist critics of Gilligan argue (See Greeno and Maccoby 1986), but rather a claim about the kind of work women tend to do as a result of social expectations, norms and inequalities. In her defence, Lawrence Blum states that Gilligan's work 'claims empirical support for the existence of a moral outlook or orientation distinct from one based on impartiality, impersonality, justice, formal rationality, and universal principle' (Blum 1988, 472). By examining the different responses of male and female children to the moral problems originally designed by Kohlberg, Gilligan concluded that women tend to develop differently from men. She argues that women see themselves relationally, whereas men tend to see themselves separately, from the other. Even the moral problems themselves are designed, according to Gilligan, with this male approach to moral reasoning in mind. Thus the female response is misunderstood by the interviewer and deemed to be a case of lower moral maturity rather than there being a problem with what is deemed by the interviewer to be the morally mature answer.

Gilligan's studies seem to show a difference in male and female moral reasoning. While Gilligan can be criticised for her study samples not being representative, and for it not being clear that care is gendered when we take into account larger more diverse samples, authors like Marilyn Friedman argue that even if care ethics is not a distinctly female orientation, it is symbolically female (Friedman 1995). What it highlights is the disparity between two different types of reasoning and how they might be related to how we experience the world. Traditionally, and often still, women are the primary caregivers, not only in family life, but also in caring professions, as argued in the previous chapter. The moral psychology of Gilligan's ethics is thus: the way women often experience the world is in terms of their relationship with others and in particular those closest to them, such as children and other dependent relatives or friends. Men on the other hand have traditionally experienced the world in terms of their own individual path – and this remains commonplace. While they have families, their role may be limited to financial

provider and as such they have tended to concentrate on their job and their status. The realm of men for most of human history has been the public sphere and, in the modern West, where the public and private are so explicitly separated, it is in terms of one individual's claims against another that male moral theories have determined societal relations. This distinction between male and female reasoning is a very crude one, of course, and is simply designed to illustrate the social tendency of men and women to inhabit different roles, which may influence their moral reasoning because of the particular standards and expectations of those roles. Of course there will be exceptions to the generalisation and differences according to class, race and sexuality: men who work in the caring profession, people in same sex relationships and women who have chosen to pursue a career instead of have children. Again, these differences are more than likely to depend on the demands of the roles they inhabit. The main point Gilligan is trying to argue is that the dominant conception of moral maturity needs to be reconceived by moral philosophers and psychologists if certain roles, certain types of work or practices, are not to be denigrated as lacking in moral reasoning. The further implication might also be that our public social relations are lacking in genuine moral reasoning because it is the appeal to abstract principles of justice which is flawed, not the rarely-heard appeal to our embeddedness within particular social relations and practices.

One explanation Gilligan offers for the gendered differences in moral development is that in the early years of childhood development, boys and girls have different experiences of relationships. The boy's experience of relationship is defined by differentiation and separation from the primary caretaker, usually female, in the early years of his development. The girl on the other hand recognises continuity with the caretaker(s) and experiences attachment; 'female identity formation takes place in a context of ongoing relationship' (Gilligan 1993, 7). So in identifying as female, she sees herself in relation to other females – mothers, aunts, pre-school teachers etc. – as most primary caretakers tend to be female. Boys on the other hand go through a process of separation in developing a masculine gender identity. According to the Kohlbergian view of moral development, this process makes them more advanced than girls in terms of rational objective thinking and individuation, because they do not see themselves as embedded in social relationships. The problem Gilligan identifies is that mainstream psychological development theories see women's lack of differentiation and their embeddedness in relationships as a developmental deficiency. The fact that women emerge from their

childhood with a better sense of empathy and of experiencing other people's needs and emotions as their own, does not entail that women are naturally more empathetic and less rational. Rather it shows that supposed objectivity and individuation are more valued and perceived to be the correct way in which we should develop, according to theories of moral development such as Kohlberg's. It also shows that girls and boys generally experience development in different ways and this may be because caregivers are usually female.

In order for boys and girls to experience development more equally, so that boys also develop the capacity for empathy and recognise their embeddedness in relationships, without this being seen as a moral deficiency, adult male parents also need to more visibly engage in caregiving. In order to do that they need to be given the same opportunities to actively parent as mothers are and there would need to be a cultural change in working practices, which took the demands of family life as seriously for men as it does for women. If boys see their male role models only in terms of authority figures who earn wages for the family and if they see their mothers primarily in terms of caregiving and domestic labour, even if mothers work outside the home as well (working the double-day), then they are less likely to see caregiving as something morally and socially worthwhile. Equally, girls need to see that mothers are not expected to do all the caregiving and domestic labour, but are able to share that work with fathers who actively seek it as a worthwhile social activity. While this explanation may seem like an oversimplification, and one which pays attention only to conventional heterosexual familial arrangements, it nonetheless demonstrates that traditionally gendered roles within the family have a clearly gendering and unjust effect on the upbringing of children, such that the capacities required for caregiving are somewhat denigrated in the eyes of children, especially boys.

It is difficult to deny that caring is central to the wellbeing of a family and its members. Therefore, Kohlberg's focus on Rawlsian justice reasoning alone seems ill-fitted to furthering our understanding of what it is for a family to flourish even if issues of justice are still relevant to familial relations, as the previous chapter demonstrated. Kohlberg's approach, despite his ignorance and denigration of the private sphere in understanding advanced moral development, did use caring, familial relations to illustrate his moral dilemma. Yet, the acceptable response to Kohlberg's dilemma ignores any particularities

of the relationship between husband and wife. The general point which we can draw from Gilligan's analysis is that an ethics of care approach is more suited to understanding the particularities and relationships of family life than one of justice reasoning alone which tries to remove contextual details and apply rules derived from abstract or pure reason.

5.3   Is there a place for justice in care ethics?

The previous section raises the question of the extent to which justice is relevant to the care ethics approach. Flanagan and Jackson point out that different moral problems draw out different kinds of moral response so it may be that we need different dispositions depending on the particular moral situation we are faced with (1987, 625). This argument seems to imply that we need to be both just and caring in order to deal with moral problems appropriately and to know which disposition is required for each situation. They also argue, following Gilligan's claims, that 'for most individuals one way of seeing moral problems dominates the other way of seeing to some degree, and that the direction of dominance is correlated with gender' (1987, 625). However, they suggest that how we construe moral problems, which are less monumental in scale than those of abortion or matters of life and death, is generally a matter of 'preference' rather than gender and that while we may be able to switch to a different moral orientation when asked if there is another way of construing a moral problem, we generally believe our preferred mode to provide the most defensible solution (1987, 625-6). The question raised by Flanagan and Jackson's argument is whether or not it *is* simply a matter of choice between the perspective of justice reasoning and care ethics when we are confronted with moral problems. The difficulty with claiming that moral standpoints are a matter of preference is that this leads to the emotivist claim that moral judgements lack truth value and are purely emotional attitudes which cannot be rationally evaluated.[17] Instead, it might be more fruitful to say that having a different disposition depending on the moral problem one is faced with does not necessarily entail trying to change one's entire moral attitude. Rather, care ethics advocates that we look at the particularities of a situation in order to determine what it is one should do, rather than appealing to an abstract set of moral injunctions every time. Furthermore, from a MacIntyrean perspective, different practices

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[17] See MacIntyre's critique of emotivism in *After Virtue* (1985).

cultivate different virtues, which are required to participate in and achieve the goods of the activity. It is with reference to the virtues and the goods of the activity and how they are order towards human flourishing that we can determine what we should do.

Virginia Held discusses the possibilities of meshing together the two perspectives of justice and care. She criticises Gilligan's early approach to justice and care, arguing that seeing justice and care as alternatives does not help us decide which we should favour when their recommendations conflict with one another (Held 2005). Held is equally critical of Nel Noddings, whose approach rejects abstract rationality (which prioritises justice) completely, and instead argues that care should be made central to any moral theory. However, Held contends that care alone would struggle to deal with 'the structural inequalities and discriminations of gender, race, class and sexual orientation' (2005, 62). Instead she argues that justice and care should be meshed together. In discussing justice she automatically includes the terms of rights, equality and liberty whilst in talking about care she includes notions of relatedness, empathy and trust. In defending the ethic of care, Held argues that,

> The charge that a feminist ethic of care is particularistic, limited to the contexts of family and friends, or merely descriptive of the kinds of restricted lives of caring for others to which women have traditionally been confined, is based . . . on a misunderstanding of this ethic (2005, 65).

As for the possibilities of an ethic of care making fundamental structural changes to society that would normally be ascribed to principles of justice she states:

> Instead of seeing law and government or the economy as the central and appropriate determinants of society, an ethic of care might see bringing up children and fostering trust between members of the society as the most important concerns of all. Other arrangements might then be evaluated in terms of how well or badly they contribute to the flourishing of children and the health of social relations (2005, 64).

Held thus sees the potential for care ethics to provide a moral framework which can have application beyond intimate relations and which also addresses the concerns of justice. Rather than male dominated 'public institutions' determining the health of a society, Held argues that we look at the health of what are thought to be private social relations to see how well or badly society contributes to their wellbeing. While this thesis is concerned with similar goals, the Aristotelian approach defended does not require that paying attention to the concerns of both justice and care entails having to integrate two

opposing or conflicting moral standpoints. Some ethics of care theorists are, as we have already stated, rightly critical of pure justice reasoning but it does not mean that justice is irrelevant to or has no place in a more particularistic ethics; though many argue care should take priority. There seems to be a danger of conflating having to choose between opposing moral standpoints (i.e. the abstract rationality of liberalism and the moral particularity of care ethics) with paying attention to two different moral concerns or virtues (i.e. justice and care), which are not necessarily mutually opposed. Thus being both just and caring should not lead to the blocking of moral clarity about what should be done, as Flanagan and Jackson suggest might sometimes be the case. To understand justice, in the Aristotelian sense, one does not need to appeal to abstract principles but rather to what is owed to people in virtue of how they contribute to the achievement and sharing of common goods.

5.4   Care ethics as a comprehensive abstract moral theory

In contrast to Gilligan and Noddings who emphasise the particularity of care ethics Diemut Bubeck attempts to transform the disparate concepts and theories of care ethics into a comprehensive, Rawlsian-style, abstract moral theory. She defines care as 'a response to a particular subset of basic human needs, in other words, those that make us dependent on others' (Bubeck 2002, 165). She distinguishes care from 'activities or acts that are expressions of love, friendship, or consideration' in order to further qualify her definition of care, though she recognises that care and love may often coincide. The reason for this particular qualification, Bubeck argues, is firstly that an emotional bond need not exist in order for someone to give care to another. Secondly, acts which express an emotional bond such as that of friendship or love are not always care. A caring act satisfies the needs or wants of the other that the other could not satisfy herself.

The first problem with this argument is that while it may be the case that the act of caring does not require an emotional bond, without some attachment between the giver and receiver of care, or some motivation drawn from the particular character of the carer, bad caregiving *may* result. I will return to this claim later. Moreover it is usually through intimate social relations that we can cultivate the disposition to give care ungrudgingly. In other words, such a disposition to care about, as well as for, another is first cultivated within family life and early education.

The second problem with Bubeck's argument is that many of our needs and wants which are not urgent, such as the need for friendship, also cannot be satisfied by the agent alone; one needs another person with whom one can be friends. This argument is significant for a discussion of the family because the relationship between parents or a couple, and between a parent and a child, can be characterised as particular forms of friendship (they certainly are for Aristotle). A friend may be able to give many other things that a person cannot achieve alone, such as emotional support. If one is suffering with grief, a friend or family member may be able to share that grief and provide the kind of care and support that one could not possibly obtain alone. One cannot talk things through with oneself very easily. Being able to talk a problem through entails someone else being able to cast a different perspective on the problem. In fact, Bubeck does recognise that one cannot talk a problem through with oneself, yet she does not recognise friendship as a similar response to care. Instead, she distinguishes the act of talking things through as a form of caregiving from actual friendship. This may be the case with a therapist with whom one talks about one's problems. However, in friendship one does not stop being a friend and become a carer to meet a certain need, such as talking through a problem, and then go back to being a friend when the need has passed. If one is a true friend, one meets the needs of the friend because she becomes a part of oneself, to the extent that the harms she suffers provokes one's own suffering, rather than because of an abstract appeal to an 'ethic of care'. A friend in an Aristotelian sense also goes beyond meeting basic needs and has concern for the flourishing of her friend. A parent, for example, should be concerned with not only the basic needs of his child such as providing nutrition, health and shelter, but also with the child's character formation and moral development. This understanding of friendship thus provides a motivation for acting to meet a need.

In Bubeck's argument the agent's motivation for action is appeal to an abstract ethic of care, that it is one's duty to give care, and this may or may not coincide with an intimate relationship of love or friendship. The agent does not appeal to love or friendship but rather what the ethic of care tells him he should do. Bubeck thus attempts to universalise norms and rules of care. Yet, if we do not distinguish between acts of care and other acts, we can see that a similar disposition or virtue of character is required of a friend, a carer or a therapist which is then applied and acted on in different ways according to the social context. Furthermore, if we develop and encourage certain characteristics which are

empathetic, open and responsive to need and which are generous and open-handed as well as just, then these good characteristics can be applied beyond the intimate relations in which they are fostered to situations with strangers and other citizens; which is certainly the aim of, at least some, care ethicists.

Bubeck's definition of care refers to *basic human needs* but I maintain that friendship and love *are* basic human needs because we are naturally social animals. What Bubeck seems to mean, with this conception of need, are more physical and material needs such as nutrition, the provision of mobility, the administering of medicines, and perhaps the provision of mental stimulation such as music, conversation etc. which an elderly person or a young child might not be able to obtain for themselves through friendship or socialising. These are the sorts of needs which can be met by professional carers when one does not have family members or friends to provide them. They are also the sorts of needs which characterise someone who is in a long term state of dependency. However, dependency is not an all or nothing state of being – we are not either dependent or independent consistently for periods of time. For example, we may become temporarily ill and only be able to do certain things for ourselves or we may become emotionally needy through loss or when things do not go well in our lives. In these situations we often need friends or family to sustain us, to reason with us and to listen to us. We may also be dependent on someone for only one thing.

The point is we are not *only* dependent when we cannot do basic tasks for ourselves; dependency can be understood in a much more nuanced way. The specialisation of care as something only certain people with certain material or physical needs require, also seems to continue the 'Othering' of dependency. We all may encounter dependency intermittently on a daily basis but the degree to which we experience dependency will no doubt vary throughout our lives and from person to person. Bubeck rightly points out

> that throughout the lives of all human beings there are times when we do need others to care for us in various ways, especially at the beginning and end of our lives, but also whenever we are faced with needs that we cannot possibly meet ourselves (Bubeck 2002, 165).

Therefore, at times she does recognise that dependency is not a special case for certain persons but something which is experienced universally, if in different ways. However, Bubeck argues that care has been mystified in so many ways so that even many women believe that those they provide care to could not do certain things without their care,

when in fact they could. So in the case of a wife cooking her husband's dinner, assuming he is able-bodied he would be able to do this for himself. However, Bubeck argues that a woman may confuse her act of love, or the service she provides, for care because she thinks her husband would not eat properly if she did not cook for him. Bubeck thus delineates care from other activities in order to firmly situate it in the realm of socially necessary labour. With Bubeck's definition, one can then supposedly distinguish between care and a service or act of love by whether it meets a certain type of need, rather than judging by the activity itself. Hence cooking a meal for someone who is disabled in such a way that they are incapable of cooking a meal for themselves is understood as care, as distinguished from a wife cooking her able-bodied husband a meal because she sees that as part of her role as a loving wife.

Bubeck's intent is obvious and admirable; that women can only be liberated from subservient roles when socially necessary labour is distinguished from acts of love and kindness and perhaps even remunerated. However, while this delineation provides a critical tool against confusing care with subservience it also confines caregiving to acts that simply meet the needs of those who cannot act for themselves or, in other words, those who are entirely dependent. In doing so it rules out the idea of caregiving as something which we might do for anyone, regardless of their need, out of a caring disposition. In order to deal with this problem but maintain Bubeck's goal of separating care from subservience, it might be more useful to distinguish between different reasons for action rather than the types of actions themselves. Instead of appealing to an abstract ethic of care, we should appeal to practical reason. Why do we act in such a way for this person? What are their needs and what are our needs? What motivates us? Do we guide our emotions with reason or has our reason been clouded by our desire to please?

Bubeck goes on to argue that we need an ethics of justice as well as an ethics of care – in other words, a just distribution of the burden of care. In doing so she seeks to bring care to a more abstract level and distribute it as a responsibility of everyone. Unlike other care ethics feminists, she rejects the over-personalisation of care – that the paradigm case is an intimate relationship – because she believes this is an over-sentimentalised view which mythologises the mother or caregiver. She argues that private caregiving must be supplemented with a gender-neutral public 'caring service' in order to provide a just distribution of care to all individuals that need it; though she does not reject private

caregiving altogether perhaps because she recognises that love and friendship do often coincide with care. Bubeck contends that the ethics of care alone is morally incomplete because it does not solve the 'exploitation dilemma'. Thus, in order to shield caregivers from exploitation, she believes we need to endorse an independent but complementary ethic of justice.

Diana T. Meyers, on the other hand, argues that though considerations of justice are important in an ethic of care, it *is* feasible to advocate a 'caring service' on the basis of an ethic of care alone. For example, one might act on one's own caring principles (or a citizens obligation to care), as someone who is not overburdened with caring responsibilities, by lobbying the government to create such a caring service in order to help those women who are exploited as caregivers (Meyers 1998, 248). In other words, one may seek to care for carers. She argues that, since Bubeck states that the ethic of care is not confined to intimate relations, there would be no obstacle to a citizen acting in such a way. A caring service might assist families, usually female family members, who provide full-time care to a dependent family member thus relieving some of the burden that full-time caring places on women and others who give care. This, however, would not be going far enough for Bubeck who sees care labour as the responsibility of all and not just caring citizens. However, both Meyers and Bubeck seem to be guilty of what Gilligan objects to in her critique of abstract reasoning; that it attempts to appeal to universal principles and misses the particularity that attention to experiences gives us. They both argue for a morality based on an abstract ethic of care, which parallels liberalism's abstract ethic of justice. The idea that we act on a set of caring principles which we can apply in any situation where there is need, neglects the need to give care in the right way. How a doctor gives care, and why she does, is different to why and how a parent gives care. Even how a parent gives care differs from how a friend would give care to another friend. Though care is particular it is also something we owe to everyone, and thus it seems to also be a matter for justice, but that does not mean it is something abstract. In fact, though we give care in different ways and for different reasons, we may still embody the same sorts of characteristics in each situation; characteristics like empathy, responsiveness to need, trust and sensitivity. Moreover, having fostered these characteristics entails knowing how to appropriately exercise them in a particular situation.

In defining care ethics as a set of abstract principles, as Bubeck tries to do, it becomes difficult to see how it can contribute to a better understanding of what a good family is or how wider society can be reoriented towards valuing care and the various characteristics which can be embodied in caregiving. Even if it results in society valuing caring labour, even remunerating it, nevertheless it fences off caregiving as another form of labour which does not require an emotional attachment and does not encourage caring characteristics outside of the activity of caring labour. If care becomes a formal obligation and the necessary virtues of caregiving are not fostered, then it is likely many people will become resentful of the obligation and good caregiving will not result. Furthermore, a universal caring service depersonalises care which can only have a damaging effect on family life, participation in which is a deeply personal experience. The strength of the care ethics approach is that its attention to particularity allows a nuanced understanding of different caring situations. Because all families are different, they have to respond to need and dependency in different ways. Thus the ethics of care helps us to analyse the problems and tensions in family life and work out how to avoid exploitation of carers, or the meeting of one person's needs at the expense of another's. Bubeck's version of care ethics, while drawing attention to exploitation, loses the attention to particularity which is the strength of care ethics.

A further, and final, problem Meyers identifies with Bubeck's thesis is her narrow definition of care and broad definition of justice (1998, 249). With her narrow definition of care, Bubeck confines the dilemma of exploitation to only a small group of unpaid caregivers who are mothers of very young children or daughters or partners of seriously ill or disabled adults. With her broad definition of justice, if a carer is treated unjustly, including exploitation, this does not necessarily entail being harmed (though this depends on how one defines harm). Her approach ignores the problem that Eva Feder Kittay points to when she says that all caregivers are vulnerable to exploitation:

> Because of the special demands of caregiving and because of the traditional assignment of this work to women or servants, dependency workers are more subject to exploitation than most. When paid, dependency work is rarely well paid. When done by family members, it is, as a rule, unpaid (Kittay 2002, 260).

This potential for exploitation, Kittay argues, is relevant for all kinds of social care including childcare; not just the care of the sick, elderly and disabled and not just the care of mothers for young children. She defines care in a much more multifaceted way than

Bubeck. Arguably, Kittay provides a more nuanced view of care ethics which has greater implications for our understanding of family life, perhaps because of her particular perspective as a mother of a child with a severe cognitive disability.

5.5   Care ethics as a practical particularistic ethics

For Kittay, care 'is a labour, an attitude, and a virtue' (2002, 259). As a labour it is attending to someone who is in a condition of need. As an attitude, caring is a positive affective bond which requires investment in another's wellbeing. One can do the labour without the attitude according to Bubeck's thesis but Kittay argues that one cannot give *good* care without a caring attitude or 'positive affective bond and investment in another's wellbeing' (Kittay 2002, 259). This argument begins to address the problem identified earlier that while it may be the case that an individual act of caring does not require an emotional bond, without attachment between the giver and receiver of care over time, bad caregiving may result. What the caring attitude provides is an open responsiveness to another which allows the carer to understand the cared-for's needs, thus, Kittay argues, it is essential to performing the labour of caregiving. She also claims that we must not only advocate for the needy, sick and otherwise disabled but we must also advocate for their carers who are similarly in a vulnerable position. To not do so is, according to Kittay, unjust and uncaring. While the cared-for may be totally dependent on the carer, the carer may also be vulnerable; to those in whose interest it is to have the needy person cared for, and to the actions of the cared-for. In terms of the family, feminists have long argued that women have been exploited as caregivers because it is in the interests of men to have their children cared for by the children's mothers enabling men to continue to pursue other projects in public life.

Equally, however, the cared-for are often in a position where they too can be exploited by the carer. The more severe their need the more vulnerable they are to exploitation. A great deal of trust is bestowed on the carer that she will not abuse her power over the cared-for. The greater the lack of voice the dependent has, the more opportunity there is to violate that trust. Again, with regards to the family, children are in a particularly vulnerable position when parents have absolute authority over their children and children have no independent voice of their own, particularly young children. However, if some kind of emotional bond forms between the carer and the dependent, Kittay argues, then

it is more likely that the carer will meet the moral obligation to provide for the dependent's needs, 'The caregiver who has cultivated the virtue of care comes to view the interest of the charge as part of her own wellbeing' (Kittay 2002, 261). A model of parental care that focussed purely on the basic needs of the child, through appeal to an abstract set of norms and rules of caregiving, does not seem like an ideal model of parenting. Nor can we assume that parents and other family members automatically have the necessary dispositions to give good care to children and other dependents, simply because they love each other. When we remember the care given to us by our parents when we were children, it is not being fed and clothed and provided with shelter that we remember as caregiving (though obviously this is essential for our growth and health); it is rather the attention paid to us when we hurt ourselves, when we suffer with grief, and the sharing of that pain with our parents that we remember as caring. Furthermore, developing the capacity to care for other human beings begins with the particular relationships which children first encounter. As Noddings argues 'how good I can be depends at least in part on how you treat me' (2002, 210). Evidently caregiving is other-directed and so the virtuous carer is not accommodated in the liberal picture of the rationally self-interested actor.

5.6   Conclusion

This chapter began with the work of Carol Gilligan and her claim that what moral psychologists consider to be normal moral development is in fact how boys generally develop, and that girls are not morally inferior or less well developed but often develop differently. For Gilligan, while boys develop through a process of separation, girls develop relationally and see themselves as embedded in particular relationships. While Gilligan sees care and justice as different approaches to reasoning through moral problems, she does recognise the need for both justice and care in a mature moral standpoint.

This chapter then went on to explore what place the concept of justice has in the care ethics approach. It turns out the answer to this question is not straightforward. For some, like Held, both justice and care are important but care should take priority over concerns about justice. For others, like Noddings, care ethics is an alternative perspective to justice reasoning and universalisability ought to be rejected 'except in the universal accessibility of the caring attitude' (Card 1990, 101). Alternatively, Flanagan and Jackson argued that

the demands of care and the demands of justice might require different dispositions but that most people endorse one or the other perspective according to their own preference, rather than their gender. They also posed the possibility that people can switch between perspectives depending on what the situation called for. The suggestion is that one cannot simultaneously endorse the claims of justice and the claims of care but must choose between them. An Aristotelian virtue ethics perspective however is capable of responding to the claims of both. How it is able to do so is explored in the next chapter.

The remainder of this chapter then looked at two different ways in which care ethics has been taken by different theorists. One approach, as endorsed by Diemut Bubeck, is to universalise the norms and rules of care, to reason from abstract principles that all members of a society have a duty to care. Bubeck also argues, however, that an ethic of care needs a complementary ethic of justice in order to produce a just distribution of care through a universal caring service. The foundation of Bubeck's argument is to differentiate care as a duty or labour from other 'services' we might provide to loved ones or friends. The second approach, as endorsed by Kittay, sees care ethics as a practical particularistic ethics. For Kittay care is a labour, attitude and a virtue. One needs the attitude in order to be motivated to carry out the labour, and the virtue to carry it out well. Kittay recognises the potential for exploitation in both the giver and the receiver of care. As such, the institutions we design must be sensitive to both kinds of exploitation.

Despite the range of debates taking place within care ethics, this relatively new development in feminist thought and moral theory provides some interesting insights. Because moral development begins when we are children who are raised within families, how we parent and how we socialise children will clearly effect their development into adults who can reason for themselves. Care ethics seems to complement virtue ethics in that it adds to the list of classical virtues of independence, a set of virtues required for us to be caring persons who are embedded in complex networks of particular relationships. At the end of the liberalism chapter I argued that the continued good functioning of the family is not just important for the sake of enabling children to become adults who can pursue their own individual interests. Feminist care ethics, with its mosaic of insights, demonstrates how human beings are interconnected and socially constituted. This is compatible with my Aristotelian claim that the common good, of a community of practice or a community of locality, constitutes and informs our own individual good, rather than

being the simple aggregation of individual interests. Care ethics also recognises our inherent vulnerability and our dependence on others to become the kinds of human beings who are able to reason about moral dilemmas. The next chapter considers how contemporary Aristotelian virtue ethics can be synthesised with care ethics to provide the foundations for an account of what constitutes familial flourishing.

6. Integrating Aristotelian Virtue Ethics with Feminist Care Ethics

6.1 Introduction

Both care ethics and virtue ethics have been strongly critical of contemporary liberal thinking, such as rights-based theories and abstract universalism, and, in particular, the focus on the individual at the expense of relationships and community. In this chapter I will be arguing that, although care ethics has done much to draw attention to the facts of dependency and human vulnerability, as well as criticise traditional liberal theory for its ignorance and denigration of care and dependency, it still often embeds itself within that very same liberal tradition. I propose instead that the resources of the tradition of Aristotelian virtue ethics are much more fruitful for care ethics to engage with. The general purpose of the chapter is therefore, to ascertain how, if at all, the insights of care ethics into family life can be integrated with Aristotelian virtue ethics in order to further develop an account of what constitutes a flourishing family life.

While it is clear that Aristotle is no feminist ally, there does seem to be a great deal in Aristotelian thought which is compatible with feminist care ethics. An account of caregiving is missing from Aristotle's work because he only recognised dependency as something belonging to others, in particular those whose experiences he gave little weight to such as women, slaves, servants and those engaged in productive labour (MacIntyre 1999, 6), rather than something which all human beings encounter. Furthermore, Aristotle's conception of masculine virtue acts as a barrier to the acknowledgment of the facts of human dependence. The magnanimous man, who is 'a paragon of the virtues, dislikes any recognition of his need for aid from and consolation by others' (MacIntyre 1999, 7). Shared suffering must be avoided, according to Aristotle, because we should not want to see our friends in pain. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he argues, 'we should call on our friends for help most of all when they are in a position to do us great service at the cost of little disturbance to themselves' (*NE* IX 1171b 19-20). Yet caregiving usually requires a great deal of disturbance to the caregiver and seems to require the caregiver to share at least some of the cared-for's pain in order to attend to their needs adequately. This chapter will discuss whether care is a virtue, a feeling or an action. In order to provide an answer to this question, the work of other contemporary

Aristotelians, as well as feminist theorists of care ethics who have carried out a sustained and fruitful dialogue with virtue ethics, will be drawn on. In essence, I will argue that caregiving or 'caring for' is an activity and 'caring about' is a passion or capacity, which can be rationally and empathetically directed towards good caregiving through the exercise of particular virtues.

6.2 On what grounds is Aristotelian virtue ethics compatible with care ethics?

Aristotle praises beneficence or generosity towards significant others, though he is critical of sharing one's pain with one's friends. As Alasdair MacIntyre points out:

> We are able to draw upon Aristotelianism to characterize the kind of friendship that we need, but we need more than Aristotle himself provides, because of Aristotle's reluctance to admit the extent to which our need for friendship is bound up with the sharing of our vulnerability and our wounds (MacIntyre 1999, 164).

Thus while Aristotle downplays the universal significance of dependency, his approach to ethics is grounded in the kind of anthropology that is uniquely suited to discuss issues of taking care of each other's bodies. Ethics is linked to our embodiment such that we cannot talk about 'good' or 'bad' action except in relation to our ability to live a particular kind of animal life—that is one of passions/emotions and bodily infirmity. Human beings are a certain kind of animal, which is admissible because we *are* our bodies, 'whose movements afford expression to intentions and purposes . . . [and] cannot be adequately understood except in terms of the social contexts in which it engages with others and others with it' (MacIntyre 2006b, 86). This recognition of our animality provides an anthropological grounding for an Aristotelian ethics which is compatible with many of the claims of feminist care ethics.

Firstly, from the standpoint of Aristotelian virtue ethics, the good of the family cannot simply be a private concern but rather is an issue for the whole of society, even those who do not have families. For Aristotle, it is important that family life prepares children to be citizens of the *polis* who participate in public political life. What is most valuable about family life then is the making and sustaining of highly particular relationships and through these relationships cultivating good character and a common conception of the good. Moreover, the family is where one begins to learn how to reason independently and to

stand back from one's desires so as to order them towards the good. Secondly, from the standpoint of care ethics, what is central to a good family is the proper care and avoidance of exploitation of dependents including children, the elderly, and the otherwise disabled; because we all encounter dependency throughout our lives and because when we are dependent we cannot act self-sufficiently. Furthermore, we should also be concerned with caregivers themselves because they too are dependent either on other family members for financial and emotional support, or on the state for welfare. Thus the cultivation of a more caring society, rather than an individualistic rights-based society, might be a starting point for Western citizens to learn to share common goods and participate in ongoing relationships with each other, and this might best be achieved through helping to cultivate families that function well.

A caring attitude is also necessary to provide the foundations for developing a bond between citizens – what we might call civic friendship, a concept more fully developed by Schwarzenbach (2009), where the good of our fellow citizens is understood as a part of our own good and the common goods of a community. Empathy and compassion are often called for when tensions are high between different social or cultural groups within a society. The concept of care and its associated virtues should not, therefore, be considered as a special case relevant only to those individuals who find themselves responsible for a dependent other. Cultivation of caring virtues such as charity, patience, generosity, and friendship is necessary for human flourishing because we do not always know when, and for whom, we may be called upon to give care. It may be a family member or it may be a stranger and both will require different kinds of responses.

However, while others have also argued that care ethics can be seen as a form of virtue ethics,[18] many others have argued that the two are incompatible. Held states that, 'The ethics of care is sometimes seen as a potential moral theory to be substituted for such dominant moral theories as Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, or Aristotelian virtue ethics' and 'is sometimes seen as a form of virtue ethics' (2005, 9). However, she concludes that many who write on care ethics conceive of care as of equal conceptual importance to justice, rights and utility or preference satisfaction, seeking to integrate, and sometimes reconceptualise, these other aspects of moral theory with care ethics. Michael Slote, on the other hand, believes that care ethics does not currently provide a total and systematic

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[18] See Raja Halwani who argues that care ethics should be subsumed under virtue ethics (Halwani 2003).

account of morality, which it needs to do because of its deep inconsistencies 'with traditional and, especially, rationalist/liberal views about ethics' (2010, 5). Yet he also has reservations about the compatibility of care ethics with what he calls 'neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics'. Slote claims that many care ethicists object to virtue ethics on the grounds that it sees moral value as residing in individual traits or virtues rather than in relationships (2007, 86).

Yet this objection to virtue ethics seems contentious. The Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics sees relationships with others as *essential* to fostering and exercising virtues. While virtues are attributes or character traits of a human being which are not reducible to their actualisation, a human being is not born virtuous. Everyone has the potentiality to become virtuous but only by repetition of virtuous activity until one is habituated to that activity. A potentiality that is not fostered and exercised is of little moral value. However, we must also be more specific about what we mean by 'moral value'. If we mean something which contributes to the flourishing life, then there is moral value in friendship (*philia*), which Aristotle applies to the parent-child relationship as well as relations between citizens. According to Aristotle happiness or flourishing consists in activity, thus if one is unconscious all of the time one cannot flourish.[19] Moreover, activity is difficult for one who does not have friends: 'for an isolated person life is difficult, for being continuously active is not easy by oneself, but is easier in the company of people different from oneself, and in relation to others' (*NE* IX 1170a5-7). Therefore, it is through activity in different kinds of friendship with others that one finds fulfilment. Moral value, in the sense which Slote seems to mean, is certainly found in human relationships for virtue ethics, because relationships are constitutive of a good life, not simply a means to some further end.

6.3   Caregiving as an activity; 'caring about' as a motivation to act

In this section, I argue that care is an activity, not a virtue, and moreover that care *qua* activity is distinct from caring *about* someone. Caring about someone may provide the motivation for caregiving activity or it may provide the motivation for some other kind of activity such as providing economically for the cared-for. For the purposes of this thesis, I

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[19] Even contemplation, rational thinking and co-operative deliberation are forms of activity in Aristotelian thought so physical incapacity does not necessarily bar us from flourishing.

am only concerned with caring for and about other people as opposed to caring about non-human animals, a particular issue (such as climate change) or an inanimate object (such as a much-loved vintage car). Nonetheless, some of what I say may have application to non-human animals and social issues which concern the wellbeing of humans and other animals.

Maureen Sander-Staudt claims that a gender-sensitive distinction must be made between the specific activity of caregiving and other forms of virtuous activity which result from 'caring about' someone because 'Typically, male virtue is associated with care as a motivation, or "caring about", while female virtue is associated with caring completion, or "caring for"'(Sander-Staudt 2006, 23–24). This is so because women traditionally tend to do the actual labour of caregiving whereas men's 'caring about' attitude, perhaps as a father, can result in an array of different activities which usually does not include hands-on physical caregiving. Consequently, this discussion will presuppose caregiving as an activity that entails hands-on care of the kind which supports someone, who is dependent in some capacity, to achieve ends which they would not otherwise be able to achieve on their own. Caregiving includes but is not limited to activities such as feeding, bathing, clothing, administering medicines, aiding movement, et cetera. Recognising this gender-sensitive distinction between caregiving activity and caring about someone is an important step for feminists who seek to reconfigure gender-based understandings of care. One might argue that this tension can be resolved by stipulating that practical activity is a necessary dimension of caregiving but, as Sander-Staudt notes, this does not remedy the problem 'since the motive of care can support practices other than caring for actual people in a hands-on way' (Sander-Staudt 2006, 24). Thus caring about someone can be embodied in practical actions other than physical caregiving.

While Sander-Staudt makes an important point about gender differences she is mistaken in defining care as a virtue. She points to Raja Halwani and Margaret McLaren's claim that 'care as a virtue should be defined as both a motive and a practical competence' (2006, 23), to support her definition of care as a virtue, in that it provides one with the right intent, but also requires competency and completion in the practice of care. Sander-Staudt's problem with Halwani and MacLaren's claim, however, is that it is gender-neutral and does not recognise the tension stated above. But this description of care as a virtue is to misunderstand what a virtue is. Practical competence is an assessment of skill, not

virtue, and virtues cannot be reduced to skills. Skills may be directed towards good or bad ends, virtues cannot. But is that actually true of virtue? Can it not be the case that one can be a courageous terrorist or prudent for the sake of looking after number one in a ruthless way, as Rosalind Hursthouse puts it? She responds by arguing

> I know that 'courageous' and 'prudent' have this use in ordinary language and it would be foolish to say that it is wrong. But . . . when used in this way (and in such turns of phrase as 'too honest', and 'generous to a fault'), the terms of the virtues are not operating *as* virtue terms—not picking out character traits that make their possessor good and issue in good conduct (Hursthouse 2002, 43).

MacIntyre makes a similar distinction, this time between virtues, skills and neutral powers:

> Virtues differ from both skills and from character traits, such as reliability and perseverance, precisely in that they are habits directed towards goods. They are not neutral powers, equally available for the pursuit of either good or bad ends (MacIntyre 2007, 153).

Remember that the virtues, for Aristotle, are the mean between extremes of passions. Someone who is too honest has gone too far to one extreme and does not hit the mean. Someone who is prudent in a ruthless way is miserly and cruel and thus also misses the mean. This is not using virtue for bad ends but missing virtue completely as Hursthouse demonstrates. One may exercise a skill or capacity well, however, for selfish or destructive ends. It is only when directed by virtue that skills or capacities become morally good. One liberal concept, discussed in chapter 3, which might be considered a neutral power, is that of autonomy or of having partial authorship over one's own life. For Raz, autonomy is an intrinsic good which ought to be pursued for its own sake and guaranteed by the state. However, once someone has the power of autonomy, they may use that power for good or bad ends. If the autonomous person is not guided by practical reason and does not have ends which are worth pursuing then autonomy may be of little use to her. Thus the capacity for autonomy can be seen as a neutral power which requires not only that acceptable options are available, but also that one is able to reason well about one's good. For this, one requires the virtues of independent practical reasoning (MacIntyre 1999).

The activity of caregiving also requires caring skills and the capacity to care about others. It might seem counterintuitive to suggest that caregiving skills or the capacity to care

about someone are neutral powers and can be destructive. However, a caregiver might be incompetent in the activity, she might care about the wrong person or she might let her caregiving consume her. In order for a caregiver not to become consumed by her caregiving activity, such that she seems to live for the cared-for person, she needs to remain the partial author of her own life. The caregiver cannot achieve this power independently, however. She also needs to have the opportunity to access a range of acceptable options. Thus caregiving should not entail that she give up all of her projects that made her life worthwhile and some of these projects might still be made accessible to her through help with her caregiving. A caregiver who is not living for the cared-for person is also more likely to be able to give care well, as long as she is able to reason well about how her own good is partly constituted by common goods.

The motivation for learning and practicing the skills, required of the activity of caregiving, may also not be good. For instance, I may give care simply to look good or to receive the rewards of praise or money and as such I may not give care in the right way or at the right time or I may abandon my charge when it suits me. Even if one has the right motivation, one may still not have the requisite virtues to carry out the activity of caregiving well. Nevertheless, having the right motivation for action is a better place to begin cultivating the virtues than being motivated by external goods of money or social standing. This does not mean that care, when it is remunerated, should not be more highly valued by society and better remunerated. The motivation for doing so would not be to attract better caregivers to the profession but rather because caregiving requires extensive resources, consumes the caregiver's energy and can be damaging to the caregiver's health. As such, the caregiver ought to have good working conditions, substantial time off, a pension and a living wage. This would only be to give the caregiver what she deserves, on an Aristotelian conception of justice, in that, as MacIntyre states, 'To deserve well is to have contributed in some substantial way to the achievement of those goods, the sharing of which and the common pursuit of which provide foundations for human community' (MacIntyre 1985, 202). However, if a caregiver is skilled but lacks the virtues or the right motivation, then the caregiver may begin to abuse her position of power.[20]

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[20] Caregiving is uniquely susceptible to abuse – from elder care (see Roger Clough, *The Abuse of Care in Residential Institutions* (1996)), to care of the young (see Mike Stein 'Missing Years of Abuse in Children's Homes' (2006)).

Perhaps this contrast – between the specific activity (or labour) of caregiving and other activities that may be a response to caring about someone – is too sharp. A caregiver might not *only* tend to the particular bodily needs of a human being dependent on their care, but might also help her in other particular ways such as arranging her finances or acting courageously when she is in danger. However, if we distinguish between the activity of caregiving, which requires certain skills, and the motivation for action, which is caring about someone, we can still recognise the gendered tension brought out by Sander-Staudt without calling care a virtue. Harry Frankfurt argues that caring about something is not within the scope of ethics but instead 'is constituted by a complex set of cognitive, affective and volitional dispositions and states' (1982, 262). Furthermore, he claims, the fact that someone cares about something, rather than simply desires it or believes in it, demonstrates a steadiness and persistence which is distinguishable from mere impulse. Caring guides or directs the actions of the one caring. However, as it is an affective state it is also not a virtue. This does not mean it is beyond the concerns of ethics as Frankfurt claims but rather that it does not constitute an ethical decision or action, nor is it the result of ethical thinking or activity. As Frankfurt also points out, a person may not be able to help who or what he cares about.

What is required to complete the link between what moves us (caring about someone or human beings in general) and doing care well (caring for someone), is the virtues. To put this in more Aristotelian terms, caring about a particular other's flourishing provides the end for the sake of which one acts as a caregiver. One is able to pursue and achieve that end insofar as one has the requisite virtues. For instance, if I as a caregiver am not patient with my mother who has dementia then I may become frustrated and angry with her. Such a response will obviously not help me to look after her wellbeing and will adversely affect my ability to cope with the situation thus damaging my own and her wellbeing. This response does not mean that I do not care *about* my mother or that I lack caregiving skills but it does mean I am not in command of my character. Of course it is common to feel frustrated and angry, particularly if one does not recognise the person one is caring for anymore, but this must not regularly manifest itself in one's caregiving actions. Instead, virtue must be habituated in order to do care well. This is not just for the sake of the one cared for but also for the one caring. If I am angry all of the time and let this emotion control me or if I fail to take good care of the person I care about, then I cannot flourish either. Thus caregiving—as an activity conducive to human flourishing—cannot be

achieved without the possession of the virtues, which moderate our passions in such a way that we are able to overcome the emotional difficulties that caregiving (as a distinctive activity) necessarily entails.

Care itself is thus not a virtue as Halwani (2003) and Michael Slote (2007), among others, argue it is. I may care *about* someone but if I have not cultivated the virtues—if I am not in control of my character, directing it towards good ends—I may not know how to act to help that someone when they are in need. Clearly there is also an important distinction to be made between the skills and the virtues of caregiving. One may not know how to deliver care and that is one kind of problem (of skill). But, in addition to that kind of knowledge, one needs to have acquired the kind of good habits necessary to deliver care in the face of the affective difficulties inherent in caregiving.

Not all caring relations are intrinsically good either. I may care about the wrong person; someone who hurts me or has no interest in my wellbeing (for example, someone who is using me as a means to their own ends). Furthermore, my caring attitude, or capacity to care, does not necessarily lead to the activity of good caregiving. I may, for instance, smother the one I care about with too much affection or be overly generous to the point of hindering her wellbeing, as with, for example, a parent who attends to all of her child's wants and whims. I may even come across as patronising by not recognising the cared-for's abilities and capacities. At the other extreme, in caring about someone, I may think that the best course of action is to do nothing because I may believe that the one I care about needs to help herself—become self-sufficient. Such a course of action may or may not have good outcomes depending on the context. If the one I care about is disabled, to the point of not being able to do day-to-day activities for herself, then actively leaving her with *no* care, in the belief that she needs to help herself, would damage her wellbeing. Thus the regulation of the passions in accordance with reason should properly direct one's 'caring about'. It seems likely that the misdirection of our affections, such as the love an abused person has for the abuser, is itself related to non-voluntary habits that need to be brought under the direction of reason. It also seems plausible to argue that we sometimes need the direction of another's reason in order to see how our non-voluntary habits are misdirecting our passions. Re-directing and restraining one's love or affection through reason from the standpoint of an abused person or from the standpoint of a

doting parent is of course not an easy thing to do hence it may be necessary to deliberate with others who have a different perspective on the relationship.

Caring about someone is, therefore, not virtuous on its own because the activity that the caring about results in also needs to be good. However, care theorists might object that the range of virtues do not do the moral work which the concept of care alone can do—in other words care itself should be classed as a virtue—and as such theorists like Held and Slote make care central to their ethical approach. For them, and others, the virtues are all just part of the bigger story; they derive from care or they do not encapsulate all that the concept of 'care' does. But this is exactly the point; a virtuous person might be motivated to act by caring about the wellbeing of her daughter, her family or her community and sees her own good as inextricably linked to the common goods she shares with them. As such, the good person has cultivated a range of virtues which allow her to act practically in the achievement of these goods. She is able to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right person at the right time. The concept of care thus works with the virtues, is directed by the virtues but is not in itself a virtue.

The mark of a virtue, according to MacIntyre, is 'a disposition to act in accordance with the judgments of reason, that is to act so as to achieve that immediate end or good which in this or that situation is ordered to our ultimate good' (2007, 153). Furthermore, a truly virtuous person not only acts from a sense of duty but also acts spontaneously. Duty and spontaneity are not incompatible. Instead, MacIntyre argues, we act out of duty for the sake of another and we do so 'at our best, spontaneously' (2007, 158). Passion and reason are then not mutually opposed but rather complementary. Our passions and dispositions need training and,

> of themselves they never provide us with a sufficient reason for action. We have to become the kinds of agents whose desires are disciplined and ordered, so that we are directed towards our good and take pleasure in performing those types of actions that have as their end that good (2007, 151).

The use of practical reason is required in order to discipline the passions and so be able to order them towards what is truly good; that which is in accordance with reason.

According to Rosalind Hursthouse 'Having a virtue . . . includes having certain motivations or reasons for one's actions' (Hursthouse 2002, 48). Thus the person who has the virtue of compassion is 'moved by the suffering of others' and treats their suffering as 'a reason

for acting and not acting in certain ways' (2002, 48). The compassionate person is not limited to acting only for those she is intimately connected to and cares about but is also able to care for the stranger in need. How the virtuous person acts depends on what is called for in a particular situation. Deciding how to act and being able to give justifiable reasons requires practical reasoning. Rationality in this sense is not some overly-intellectualised, higher state of being where one abstracts oneself from the particular situation and appeals to some set of universalistic rules. Nor is it a form of market rationality or cost-benefit analysis. Instead, the practically wise person makes choices which are informed by affective dispositions and which are directed towards the good both here and now and in general, according to reason. The affective state of caring about someone may come from being intimately connected to the one in need of care or it may come from an aversion to the suffering of another human being (or non-human animal). Experiencing such affective states and acting according to reason will likely develop virtuous dispositions, such as compassion, which can then be drawn upon in any situation involving a human being or non-human animal in need.

Caring for someone is often rooted in emotion or passion, much like love or sorrow, which can be transformed into compassion, patience, generosity and friendliness in terms of virtue or descend into jealousy, possessiveness, condescension (in the sense of superiority), or even (perhaps unintentional) neglect in terms of vice. Thus what we think of as classic virtues are required for completing the activities of care such as feeding, bathing, dressing, administering medicine, et cetera. If we are possessive or condescending we may bar the one being cared for from learning to do these things for themselves either as children or as someone recovering from a serious illness or accident. A situation may call for the caring person to act courageously because the one who she cares about is in danger or faces a life-threatening illness (each would entail a different kind of courage). On the other hand, the situation may call for her to act prudently on behalf of the one she cares about because she has financial problems. In another situation, when the basic activities of physical caregiving are called for, we require the virtues of kindness, compassion, patience and friendliness among others. Primarily it requires the trust of the cared-for, something which may come more naturally and spontaneously within the familial context but which has to be earned or proven in other social contexts.

How is this feeling of caring about someone transformed? For Aristotle the virtues depend on practical reasoning, but is the exercise of reason enough to cultivate good caregiving? Reason may tell us what to do for our own ends or common ends but what about when we are acting for the good of another, particularly if they are unable to tell us exactly what they need? I would suggest that we also need to use empathy in a practical way. In order to act compassionately and help to alleviate the suffering of another we need to be able to feel with the one who is suffering. Understood in this way, empathy can be a tool, like reason, which guides our desires. Slote takes a similar approach in arguing that 'empathy is the primary mechanism of caring, benevolence, compassion, etc.' (Slote 2007, 4). Empathy requires us to feel with particular others and to recognise their emotions and what they are experiencing. Such a feeling-with seems to be essential if we are to act for the sake of, or on behalf of, another person in need. Empathy is closely related to sympathy and pity and is often used interchangeably with the former. However, I follow Slote in distinguishing sympathy from empathy in that sympathy does not require the sharing of another's perspective in order to understand their happiness or suffering. Likewise, MacIntyre tries to show, through an analysis of Edith Stein's phenomenology, how empathy opens us up to understand how others see us and to see the world beyond 'how it appears to me' (MacIntyre 2006c, 75–87). On the other hand, sympathy requires a concern for the wellbeing of another and can, therefore, be understood in a similar way as caring about someone, though is perhaps less personal. Pity, meanwhile, has developed the connotations of condescension or superiority but generally means feeling sorry for. It differs from empathy in that it does not require understanding of the suffering of the one who is pitied. Pity can also be easily misplaced if one (wrongly) assumes that one's own situation is better off than the one who is being pitied.

Slote argues that empathy is taught to children by adults in order for them to learn to understand how another feels and that they may have responsibility for the pain of the other person. This is an essential part of moral education, he argues. Noddings, however, adds that 'Attachment may be a foundation for the learning of empathy' (Noddings 2010, 8). In other words, the child may not learn empathy effectively from someone she does not love or admire. Furthermore, (as quoted in chapter 1) Mann argues that 'friends are most valuable because they form an important structure in which we learn other-regarding thought and action, and they also become the enabling conditions for our own

acting and doing well, for living virtuously' (Mann 2012, 198). Thus empathy is not just taught to young children but is also continually being learned and expanded through friendships in the Aristotelian sense, which includes family members. These friendships help us to recognise the perspective of another independently of our own and also to understand ourselves better from another's perspective. This understanding is, for Aristotle, essential to flourishing as MacIntyre notes 'It is by having our reasoning put to the question by others, by being called to account for ourselves and our actions by others, that we learn how to scrutinize ourselves' (MacIntyre 1999, 148). Thus true friends are more than a comfort to us or a source of pleasure; they also provide the contexts in which we learn how to act virtuously.

Empathy, which can be understood as an affective disposition rather than a virtue, does not take priority over the virtues. Empathy can only be cultivated and sustained in a virtuous person because a harmony needs to be maintained between the passions and reason. Empathy can easily lead to one being consumed by shared pain and suffering. The danger here is that the caregiver might be manipulated by the person being cared for because the caregiver is unable to bring her empathy under the control of reason with the result that neither the caregiver nor the cared for are able to achieve authentic human flourishing. Thus reason always needs to operate alongside empathy.

6.4   Cultivating a caring moral character

The view of the virtues which has so far been expounded in this chapter seemingly places all responsibility for the cultivation of moral character on the individual. If that is the case, my argument is problematic from a feminist perspective because it places all responsibility on the caregiver for becoming a good carer in a world where care work is undervalued and hardly recognised for its moral worth. Yet my claim is also that caregivers, whether family members or paid carers, need resources to sustain their caregiving and also need the support of others. A society which does not support its caregivers and caring practices (like the family) cannot expect good virtuous caregiving to be everywhere present. Even the most virtuous and caring person would struggle to give the best kind of care to someone who was solely dependent on her if she lacked external goods and the support of others. Furthermore, individuals who find themselves responsible for a dependent other are not solely responsible for cultivating their own

caring virtues. What most people know about caregiving activity comes from family life and one's own experience of being cared for. Developing the capacity to care for other human beings begins with the particular relationships which children first encounter.

However, does this mean that one who is not cared for well, who does not have the relevant virtues nurtured by caregiving adults, is not able to become a good caregiving adult? Certainly, when children receive poor care it must have an impact on those children and their ability to form caring relationships as adults. However, I do not want to claim that it is not possible for such children to become caring adults. People, who did not begin to cultivate caring virtues as children, are still capable of cultivating virtues in adulthood needed for caregiving activity and for responding in the right way when feeling affectionate towards someone they care about. What is more, who I am called upon to care for may well be different to who cared for me. As MacIntyre argues, the deprivations to which caring virtues are the appropriate response 'are characteristically not only deprivations of physical care and intellectual instruction, but also and most of all deprivation of the attentive and affectionate regard of others' (MacIntyre 1999, 122). Thus, those who have been deprived of care may also have been deprived of affection and love which brings us back to the distinction between caring about someone and caregiving activity. If a child's family has failed her, let her down, neglected her or deprived her of affection, that child may be unable to trust and develop bonds with others whom she encounters in adult life. Furthermore, she may not see the point in caring about others or she may not know what caregiving activity entails. Those who she does encounter will have to gain her trust and the virtues of character, in particular those which guide both our emotions and our activity in relation to care, will play a big part in that.

Cultivating good character, learning how to care for people in the right way, giving what is needed by someone I care for at the right time and ungrudgingly, recognising our own enjoyment and satisfaction in giving what is needed and showing appreciation for that (as Noddings suggests) all require the education of affections, sympathies and inclinations. Furthermore, MacIntyre suggests that we can also cultivate our dispositions to feel as well as to act with and from certain feeling (MacIntyre 1999, 122). Even where caregiving is good and caregivers actually care about the children they are responsible for, children will still learn imperfectly.

Raja Halwani, in response to the care ethics criticisms of virtue ethics, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, argues that just because the flourishing life is 'ethically basic' (from this I understand him to mean the *telos* or final end of human life) it does not give the virtuous agent 'moral licence to violate the claims of others, be these strangers or intimates, when the agent's flourishing is at stake' (Halwani 2003, 169). As he points out (and as illustrated in chapter 1), the virtues are not instrumental to the flourishing life which the agent adopts when it suits the agent's needs. Rather being virtuous means one knows what is good and worthwhile and consistently exercises the virtues because that is what a flourishing life entails. Exercise of the virtues therefore involves, for example, acting courageously when a good is worth fighting for, rather than failing to act because one's own life or interests are at risk. Without exercising the virtues, one cannot claim to be living a flourishing life; the virtues are constitutive of such a life.

6.5   Is care ethics problematic for virtue ethics?

In his analysis of care ethics, in which he focuses on Nel Noddings, Halwani identifies certain key characteristics of care ethics which might be problematic for Aristotelian virtue ethics. One of these characteristics is what Noddings calls 'motivational displacement' (1984, 33). This 'motivational displacement' means that 'my motive energy flows towards the other and perhaps, although not necessarily, towards his ends' (1984, 33). The shift in one's motives as the 'one-caring' does not entail that one relinquishes oneself to the other; on the contrary, Noddings compares such relinquishment of self to when parents talk of 'living-for' their children. Such relinquishment could mean losing oneself. The question that Halwani poses in response to the idea of motivational displacement is this:

> Is it sufficient that the goals of the cared-for be believed by her (the cared-for)
> to be good in order for her friend, the one-caring, to promote them? Or
> should the goals be genuinely good? (2003, 165).

Halwani believes that from a virtue ethics standpoint, the goals must be genuinely good, such that it is morally permissible for the one-caring to frustrate the goals of the cared-for if they are not conducive to her wellbeing. Thus a certain amount of motivational displacement may occur in that the friend, or one-caring, considers the good of their friend, or cared-for, to be part of her own good, but if the ends that the cared-for pursues are bad or damaging to her wellbeing or the wellbeing of others in some way, then it

would not be good for the one-caring to adopt them. Instead, the one-caring ought to try to convince the cared-for that this course of action will not lead to a worthwhile good, nor is it good in itself. What Halwani argues virtue ethics provides is 'an ethical scrutiny of caring relationships, so that one does not end up caring for another no matter what the other's goals are' (2003, 166).

A deficiency of Aristotle's understanding of character friendship is that he leaves out the possibility of friends who are equal in virtue but who are not fully virtuous. This deficiency of virtue does not, however, negate the possibility of true friendship. Moreover, those who make mistakes, who lack virtue, need good friends to guide them and need to guide their friends in turn. In the case of family life, there is a often a bond of unconditionality which is stronger depending on the intimacy of the relationship such that when we make mistakes the good family will accept our flaws and attempt to guide us back towards the good. In doing so they might then be able to correct or at least temper the deficiencies in each other's character. One who does not at least aim at virtue and the exercise of practical reasoning will not be able to begin to judge whether this or that end is good in itself or worth pursuing for some higher good. Aristotle does, however, recognise that the parent-child relationship is a special form of friendship; one which is naturally unequal. For example, a parent should encourage their child to pursue worthwhile ends. If the child becomes self-destructive as he grows up into an adult, it would be a failure of parenting to simply adopt his ends and help him to achieve them. Furthermore, as Schwarzenbach argues, while Aristotle appears to assume that there cannot be an equal character friendship between parent and child, a case can be made on Aristotelian grounds for 'reciprocal (moral) equality' being a 'critical *ideal* or *goal* in the best parent-child relationships, whatever the ages and circumstances, at least today' and that 'The mother who wishes continued dependency and subordination for her child is hardly worthy of the name' (Schwarzenbach 2009, 47).

On the other hand, Noddings' account takes caring for another, no matter what their ends are, and adopting those ends oneself, as the basic premise of ethical relationships. In raising children, however, it is not just the case that the ends of the child need to be genuinely good but also that the parents have a role in shaping those ends and teaching children what goods are worth pursuing in themselves, or as a means to some further end. If one simply adopts the goals of a child, whatever those goals are, one fails to teach

the child how to live well. For example, if a young child's goals consist in eating as much chocolate as possible or acquiring toys and other material goods, then in supporting those goals the child will make herself sick or become greedy and selfish. It is the parent's role to teach the child that while these goods may satisfy immediate pleasures, or may have some worth in themselves because they can provide pleasure or satisfy certain needs, there are higher goods which are worth pursuing at the expense of these lower goods and that living well involves activity beyond the acquisition of things. It is also not enough to simply teach this; it also requires leading by example. Parents, on an Aristotelian account, cannot teach what they do not experience themselves. In order for children to have standards of excellence to which they can appeal, parents must not only set rules for children to follow but must also demonstrate the standards of excellence in their own activity. It is through habituation that one develops virtue and changes one's character:

> For excellence of character has to do with pleasures and pains: it is because of pleasure that we do bad things, and because of pain that we hold back from doing fine things. This is why we must have been brought up a certain way from childhood onwards, as Plato says, so as to delight in and be distressed by the things we should; this is what the correct education is (NE II 1104b9-13).

What Aristotle appears to mean is that a person whose disposition shies away from acts which are just, courageous or temperate, for example, is one who has not been educated well; who has habituated bad characteristics in order to avert pain. However, one who is disposed towards such acts is one who has educated her desires to find pleasure in virtuous acts and pain in being, for example, unjust, cowardly or intemperate. The crucial point to this argument is that in order to lead a good life one must try to do good things first in order to learn what it means to be good.

6.6   Conclusion

As I have argued, the family is the kind of enabling practice which can bring about good character in a child. Our socialisation into family life is where we first see the sort of action which we begin to emulate. As children we are apprentices – our parents and other older family members such as siblings and aunts are our teachers and guides. To put it simply, if we see people who tend to our needs acting with justice and kindness towards others and towards ourselves then we will copy these acts, even if we do not yet know what justice and kindness means. We do this initially to please those that care for

us in order to satisfy our wants. But we would equally emulate acts of injustice and unkindness if it led to satisfaction of our immediate wants as well. Therefore, it is not rationality which guides us as infants but the satisfaction of desires.

By combining the Aristotelian virtue ethics account with the insights of care ethics as demonstrated in this chapter, however, we have a much richer view of family life and the good which it pursues. Good caregiving does not come about simply from natural love. It requires some sort of attachment but it also requires an open-responsiveness to need and the habituation of rational caring virtues. Good caregiving is an ethical activity which requires certain dispositions and is constitutive of a flourishing family life by educating children into the virtues and contributing to the flourishing of those others who are either caregivers or dependent adults. Additionally, however, it does not entail the uncritical adoption of another's ends, particularly if those ends are potentially damaging. Rather it is about helping the other to pursue goals which are worthwhile, that are good in themselves or lead to a higher good and that contribute to the flourishing of those who are cared-for. In the case of the friend or partner it may be that all we need to do is persuade them that their end is not rationally defensible. In the case of the child, however, it may take years of training and habituation to transform their ends from the satisfaction of felt needs to the pursuit of worthwhile goods. Whichever situation it is, it appears that care is an important term and one which is missing from Aristotle's account of family and friendship. In fact, the idea of caring virtues, which seem to be required in these particular situations, are themselves missing from Aristotle's account.

MacIntyre's account of the virtues of acknowledged dependence is also influenced by the ethics of care and its attention to human dependency. In attaining a state of relative independence, as we reach adulthood, MacIntyre argues that we must at the same time acknowledge our dependence on others in reaching that state, recognising that our independence may well be fleeting or interrupted by states of varying degrees of dependence, if we are to live a flourishing life (MacIntyre 1999). Moreover, the idea that family life not only provides for our own care and teaches us to acknowledge dependence but also teaches us to be caring individuals towards others is an important aspect of family life which the ethics of care brings to the discussion of a flourishing family. The wellbeing of unpaid caregivers such as parents, grandparents, adult children and young carers who provide care for no other end than the good of those in their charge should be

recognised for the important good they contribute to society through educating citizens and providing for the needs of the sick, vulnerable and disabled. Caregivers should therefore be supported in carrying out this important work to the best of their ability without this damaging their own wellbeing.

Thus far I have claimed that the virtues are necessary for the achievement of good caregiving. But it is also true that caregiving is a means internal to the flourishing of family life, which, *qua* practice, necessarily requires external goods in order achieve its internal goods—the effective delivery of care and the flourishing of the family as a whole. My argument, therefore, is that caregivers, whether family members or paid caregivers, need (a) the resources necessary to sustain their caregiving, (b) the support of other persons and institutions, and (c) to grow in the virtues which perfect one's caregiving. While it is tempting to claim that virtue is the answer to the problem of caregiving, we should not assume that individual virtue alone can perfect the practice of caregiving, whether in the family or in an institutional context. Only by sustaining each of the aforementioned components can we expect caregiving to be a site of flourishing for both caregiver and the cared for. In other words, a society which does not support its caregivers cannot expect good caregiving to be everywhere present. The following chapter explores what, given everything discussed so far, constitutes a flourishing family life.

7. What are the Goods of a Flourishing Family Life?

7.1 Introduction

In chapter 1 I argued that some version of Aristotelianism is relevant to considering what a well functioning family might involve because Aristotelian thought is concerned with what constitutes human flourishing. The highest good at which human beings aim is *eudaimonia* and constitutive of the achievement of this good is a life of virtue. MacIntyre extends this understanding much further by providing an account of the way in which virtue is developed through participation in a plurality of practices that are characteristically human, which can contribute to the good life for human beings. Within each practice, practitioners rank order goods. In chapter 2 I argued that family life is a practice. It has goods internal to the practice (common goods) which are constitutive of the good of each family member. In chapter 6 I argued that Aristotelian virtue ethics needs to be synthesised with feminist care ethics in order to give a well-rounded account of familial flourishing. Care ethics is able to recognise the ethical importance of physical caregiving both for the giver and receiver of care. Moreover, this synthesis helps us to develop an account of caring virtues. MacIntyre generally avoids specifying the goods internal to practices or the highest good of an activity because he argues that it is only through participation in that activity that its goods can be understood and ordered. However, most of us are or have been part of a family at some point in our lives and, therefore, have a general understanding of what makes family life worthwhile. Furthermore, the attention in care ethics to the particularities of caring activities provides insight into the particular goods of family life.

In this chapter I argue that the highest good of the family is the sustaining of good familial functioning such that all family members feel part of the life of the family and are afforded the security to act outside of the family. Flourishing families provide support for projects outside of the family within a range of other practices. In order for the practice of family life to function well, it requires family members to exercise practical reason and to deliberate with one another in decision-making and deciding what is best for the family, and each of its members. The flourishing family also cultivates the moral virtues in its members, in particular, through the interactions and special relationships of family life.

This chapter is not intended to prescribe the ordering of goods families should aim at as each family will be different and will prioritise different ends, depending on the life stages of its members. For example, a family which consists of a married or cohabiting couple whose children have become adults and left home but have not yet had any children will have different goods which it aims at than a family which consists of a young couple with a baby and extended family members. Furthermore, the prioritisation of different ends will change through the lifecycle of the family. The aim of this chapter then is to identify characteristically human activity which is particular to family life, and how the goods which that activity aims at are ordered in different ways according to the particularities of social context. One characteristic activity of family life might be raising children. Most family members would accept this activity to be central to the wellbeing of the family. How children are raised varies a great deal even within one particular society. Instead of providing fixed rules as to how children should be raised, or defining one particular family structure as the ideal type for raising children, the Aristotelian approach defended in this thesis gives us the *tools* to identify what the goods for families in various contexts might be and how those goods might be achieved. So the approach to raising children which a family with divorced parents takes will need to be different to the approach a married or cohabiting couple takes. How these goods are achieved will inevitably vary and their achievement will rely not only on the particular standards of excellence employed and the character of family members but also on the availability of instrumental, external goods. As MacIntyre tells us in *Dependent Rational Animals* 'all happy families are not alike and only a very great novelist could have got away with telling us otherwise' (1999, 134). In other words, families flourish or fail to flourish in a plurality of ways depending on how they respond to the facts of their particular situation. Some of the causes of families failing to function well will be discussed in the following chapter. This chapter will discuss what a flourishing family life might involve.

The first section argues that, for a family to flourish, children must be cared for well. This care involves children being both physically cared for and morally educated through participatory activities which aim at common goods. It is argued here that play, trust and care are necessary goods which are constitutive of the good of raising children well.

The second section explores the value of healthy couple relations and what that entails. I argue that a healthy couple relationship requires the goods of a solid foundation of equal

friendship, which entails trust and reciprocal love, the capacity to grow together and adapt to changes in one another, and to rationally deliberate with one another about problems which might be encountered and about the shared goals of the family. What makes the conjugal relationship distinctive from friendship is discussed here. This section also looks at the capacity for single-parent families to flourish. It is argued that single parents who successfully raise children do so with greater barriers in their way than those who do so with a supportive partner. On the other hand, single-parenthood might be far more suitable than marriage if any of the goods of a healthy couple relationship are absent and cannot be retrieved. Therefore, single-parents need even greater support from extended family than do two-parent families.

Finally, the third section develops some of the ideas explored in chapter 6 about care of the elderly, sick and otherwise disabled. Here I argue that the importance of involving families in the care of dependent adults cannot be underestimated, especially when so many caregiving institutions are underfunded, with over-worked and under-valued staff only being able to provide very basic care. However, families cannot be expected to be sole providers of care because of the strain it can exert on family life, in particular on women who more often shoulder this burden, due to an aging population. One of the priorities of caregiving institutions and policy makers should be to facilitate family involvement in care wherever possible. For example, when people have to enter a care home and leave their own home or their family's home, they should be placed as close to their family as is reasonably possible.

Throughout this chapter the idea that families must always be understood within their social context is emphasised. The rise of the concept of the nuclear family ignores the continuing role of extended family as well as the participation of families in community life, whether in a rural village, suburban town or an inner-city estate. Children and adults engage in practices outside of the family, work and school which socialise children into the pursuit of goods of excellence and develop and sustain the identity of adults beyond parent and worker. For children, being a part of a family can facilitate engagement in these morally, intellectually and physically engaging activities thus developing their skills and character and teaching them to pursue goods in common with others. If children are encouraged to participate in activities beyond the confines of the home, they have more opportunities to develop their moral and intellectual capacities. Furthermore, it is

psychologically important for children to see parents as having an independent identity and as able to sustain relationships outside of family life that enable the achievement of a range of other goods. Equally, when their children leave home, parents might feel empty and without purpose if they do not have other projects which motivate them. Therefore, this chapter also provides foundations for an argument against the desirability of the nuclear family as 'a haven in a heartless world'.

7.2 The good of raising children well

There is a vast amount of research and literature on child development which I will not attempt to summarise here. The purpose of this section is to draw on some of this literature (in moral and evolutionary psychology, social work and education studies) in order to develop my argument. In doing so I provide an Aristotelian framing of the literature, even though most of the research discussed is not written from an Aristotelian perspective. Raising children well, such that they develop their moral, intellectual and creative capacities to their full potential can be one of the most rewarding goods internal to family life for both adults and children. Part of that good is a number of constitutive goods which include a number of activities and behaviours. This section will identify some of these goods.

Play is one of the goods constitutive of raising children well. It is an activity which is good in itself and which is pursued for the sake of the good of children, the development of their powers and the development of bonds between children, their peers and adults. Therefore, children ought to be, wherever possible, encouraged to, and facilitated in, play by themselves, with other family members and with other children of varying ages (Feldman and Gray 1999). While play may begin as a family activity, families also need to provide the security a child needs to play with children outside of the family in order to develop their own reasoning, empathy and other social skills. However, as bio-psychologist Peter Gray points out, play should be directed and structured by children themselves, with adults providing the secure but not restrictive environment that children need in order to play at their full potential (Gray 2011).

Play is a practical activity which is a good in itself because it can develop a child's skills and powers, and foster virtues; in particular practical reasoning, empathy and, if a child is

playing with others, the virtues of justice, patience and generosity. D. W. Winnicott, a child psychoanalyst who analyses play and its role in psychotherapy, argues that:

> To get the idea of playing it is helpful to think of the *preoccupation* that characterizes the playing of a young child. The content does not matter. What matters is the near-withdrawal state, akin to the *concentration* of older children and adults (Winnicott 1980, 60).

Winnicott implies that the activity of playing is good in itself because it absorbs the child and develops her powers of concentration. Though the young child cannot know what this good is, the parent does and actively encourages it. Winnicott also uses the concept of 'transitional phenomena' to describe how the infant develops a relationship to external reality, i.e. that he is able to differentiate between himself and the external world and distinguish the parent as separate from him. Winnicott states that there is 'a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences' (1980, 60). Thus play helps to develop the child's identity as something separate from the parent.

Winnicott claims in the above quote that the content of play does not matter; rather it is the state of preoccupation and concentration which really characterises play. However, the content of play is important for legitimate feminist concerns about socialisation into rigid gender roles. Children's toys are often gendered so that girls are encouraged to play with toys which socialise them into caring, maternal and domestic roles, playing with dolls and kitchen sets, while boys are encouraged to be adventurers, scientists and soldiers. Thus boys are expected to become masculine and independent and girls are expected to become nurturing, domesticated and somewhat dependent, whilst also taking care of dependent others. Traditional women's work is still not valued and as such society still does not encourage men to take on caregiving roles and to adopt the so-called feminine virtues, or what MacIntyre calls the virtues of acknowledged dependence. In fact, MacIntyre touches on this problem, though only briefly, when he argues that 'what we should have learned from the virtues of acknowledged dependence is that this is a respect in which men need to become more like women' (MacIntyre 1999, 164). It is not just the case that boys should be encouraged to play with dolls but that men and boys actually need to be encouraged to cultivate more caring virtues in order to live flourishing lives. Encouraging them to play with dolls may help to remove some of the stigma attached to caring virtues. Equally, however, girls should be encouraged (and increasingly

many are, at least in schools) to foster the virtues of independent reasoning and some of the so-called masculine virtues, spelled out by Aristotle as those of courage, temperance, open-handedness or generosity, magnanimity and justice. These virtues of independence should not however be confused with the pseudo-virtues of individualism, such as competitiveness and ruthlessness.

As children grow, play becomes more socially complex and the content of the play becomes more significant. Play introduces and habituates children to rule-governed behaviour. It makes the activity rewarding if one follows the rules and wins the prize or avoids the sanction. From board games with sets of rules, to playground games with rules that are passed on from one set of children to another, to sports games with universally recognised rules, children are constantly learning how to participate in communal and collective activities through the learning of rules. From a MacIntyrean perspective, the rules are not learned simply for the sake of being a good rule-follower either. Rather, they help the child to actualise the goods of the game.

Sometimes children play for themselves, developing their independent reasoning powers as in games such as chess, other times they play as part of a team, developing their social skills and learning to subordinate their own good to shared goods, through collaborative effort. Other forms of play might be more narrative-based such as when one plays with dolls and other character toys or pretends to be a character either from a well-known story or one made up by the children playing. Such pretend playing, or play-acting, might not be as obviously rule-governed (though if they involve other children they might entail the sharing of toys and props or not leaving anyone in the group out) but rather develop a child's sense of narrative, which they pick up from reading and being read stories, and the child's capacity for empathy by exploring different characters. In fact, some evolutionary psychologists argue that pretend play is essential for the development of human culture:

> In order to pretend children must imagine something that is currently not true then behave as if it were (e.g., by "drinking hot tea" from an empty cup). When placed in the context of an extended scenario (e.g., having a "tea party with friends") the imagined world, along with the possible consequences of any behaviour, has to be considered and maintained. If a cup is tipped over whatever is "spilled" should be "cleaned up." By pretending children thus develop a capacity to generate and reason with novel suppositions and

imaginary scenarios, and in so doing may get to practice the creative process that underpins innovation in adulthood (Nielsen 2012, 176).[21]

Thus pretend play also develops children's capacity for innovation and creativity.

Being inducted into any of the types of play mentioned above, for a child, is analogous to being inducted into a practice. Being inducted into the practice of family life requires the child to learn and follow rules to govern their behaviour until that behaviour becomes habituated. Rules exist to protect children's safety and direct their activity towards worthwhile ends. As such, rules set by adults should not be arbitrary. An example of an arbitrary rule might be the kind of rule set by a domineering father who prevents his children from playing out with their friends and gives no good reason. Such a father exercises power for its own sake and is blinded by that power rather than using it for the good of his children. As children develop their own reasoning abilities and begin to understand the purpose of the rules, they should therefore learn to question rules if those rules do not seem to have worthwhile ends.

A second good which is constitutive of raising children well is trust. Trust is not an activity like play but it is gained and lost through actions. In this section I focus on the trust between parents and their children; though the discussion will be relevant to the trust needed within couple relations, between parents and extended family members and between family carers and dependent adults. Trust is an important good for the parent-child relationship because young children are entirely dependent on parents such that the child's trust is initially instinctive and later becomes learned or unlearned. As MacIntyre notes, 'Initially as small children we trust others, exhibiting what Løgstrup calls "natural trust" and Aquinas the "natural friendship" of human beings for each other. But even at this early stage the capacity for trust can be either enlarged or damaged by the actions of parents' (2007, 154). As children grow they are warned by adults about trusting strangers and parents also begin to trust children with various responsibilities. There are also many opportunities for adults to abuse their child's faith in them and make her lose her natural trust. Thus MacIntyre argues that as 'adolescents and even as adults we therefore have to learn to trust all over again' (2007, 155) and, I would add, that we also have to learn to

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[21] Nielsen makes the claim that pretend play is essential for the rapid development of human culture partially on the basis that our closest living relatives, the great apes who have only a rudimentary culture, do not have a prolonged childhood stage but move from a longer stage of infancy, to a juvenile growth period, where they have to forage for food for themselves, to adulthood (Nielsen, 2012, p. 174).

become trustworthy. Becoming trustworthy requires adults to be trustworthy in the first place so that children understand the importance of being able to trust. According to MacIntyre, learning to trust again, after losing trust in someone, requires practical reason and the virtue of courage. We use our reasoning to see what reasons we have for trusting someone, or at least for not distrusting them and to examine reasons we may have for distrusting them, if they have demonstrated untrustworthiness in previous action. The virtue of courage, MacIntyre argues, is necessary because we are always taking a risk when we trust someone and 'the risks are as considerable as they are because of the uncalculating opening up of ourselves to others that… is involved in all trust' (2007, 155). The risks of natural trust, exhibited by young children, then, are the most considerable of them all because the child is unable to consider whether they have good reasons to trust this person. As a result their trust is the most vulnerable to abuse. If children's natural trust in their parents or other caregivers is continuously abused then those children will grow into adolescents who have little reason to trust anyone or be trustworthy themselves.

For the relationship of trust to be maintained and for the child to develop good reasons to trust her parents, they have to be what Winnicott terms 'good-enough' (Winnicott 1980). Parents should not try to be perfect. The good-enough parent will gradually allow the child to do more for herself so that she does not continue to depend on the parent for all of her needs, while at the same time not destroying the trust the child places in the parent. Weaning the child from breast milk to solid food is a very basic element of this process. The child may naturally trust that the breast or the bottle will always be there when she cries and the parent has to gradually remove this dependence from the child. The child then has to adapt to the change of being fed to feeding herself. The child will likely develop good reasons to believe that the parent can be trusted to provide the child with food because the parent demonstrates concern and affection for the child, not because the food just appears when the child cries. If, therefore, the parent regularly, or even from time to time, leaves the child to fend for herself before she is ready to do so, then the parent could damage the child's ability to trust. Adapting to the child's developmental needs without betraying her trust is then a complex and nuanced process which may require initially disappointing the child and then building her trust in a more rational way. This is necessary because, as MacIntyre points out,

one outcome of the failure to transform the attitudes and relationships of early childhood is an inability to achieve the kind of independence that is able to acknowledge truthfully and realistically it's dependencies and attachments, so leaving us in captivity to those dependencies, attachments, and conflicts (MacIntyre 1999, 85).

Thus if the child is kept entirely dependent by the parents, then the child cannot become an independent practical reasoner who is able to recognise the dependencies that enabled her independent powers to develop. Parents are often accused of over-protecting or mollycoddling their children, stunting and suffocating their emotional, mental and physical growth. Many parents fear that their children might be snatched from the street by a passing stranger and so prevent them from playing outside or leaving their sight. Other parents fear their children getting hurt if they climb trees or ride bikes. Because when a child hurts herself she cries, the parent wants to prevent that from happening again because she does not want her child to feel pain. However, minor pain and injuries are ways for children to test their limits and discover what is safe and what is not. On the other hand, leaving children to run wild and free with no boundaries or rules means that they often do not respect the authority of adults who are better equipped to recognise dangers and who generally know what is best for the child better than the child does.

Finally, one of the key goods constitutive of raising children is caregiving. As with trust, I focus here on the care needed for raising children well; however, some of the argument will have relevance for the discussion of care in relation to other familial goods such as the care between a couple and the care between members of extended family. Caregiving is an activity which is good in itself for both the child and the parent. Not only does it provide for the basic needs of the child but if it is guided by reason and empathy, and if it is exercised in accordance with the relevant virtues, then it will develop the bond between parent and child. Noddings' example of bathing or feeding her child, referred to in chapter 2 in which the demands of care are not felt as burdens but rather consist of occasions that make life worth living, demonstrates how care can be pleasurable and fulfilling. Of course, care can be burdensome if, for example, it consumes one's whole life, and what mother hasn't felt that burden from time to time in the first couple of years of her child's life. Care can be monotonous and physically demanding. But care can also be rewarding for both the parent and the child as long as it does not damage the health of the parent or smother the development of the child. The importance of a supportive

partner who equally engages in caregiving, of extended family, or even of reliable and trustworthy neighbours, for alleviating the burdens of care, will be discussed in the following sections.

Furthermore, in order for a parent to be a good caregiver, the parent needs goods of effectiveness. One of these goods is the skill of caregiving. However, many new parents have never had to physically care for someone before. As such, they must learn these skills as they go. There are many books and internet resources now for families in the West, often giving conflicting advice. Online communities, like www.mumsnet.com, offer a forum in which mothers who do not know each other personally may connect and share advice and approaches to parenting. Parents also might learn parenting skills from their own parents, though this also provides potential for conflict if grandparents seem to be stepping on the toes of their children, telling them how to parent well. As discussed in chapter 5 and 6, caregiving skill often entails feeding, bathing, clothing, administering medicines, aiding movement, et cetera. This may be the case for care of infants or dependent adults. However, the motivation for this kind of activity, for developing these skills and others, is caring about the cared-for. Attachment or what Kittay calls a positive affective bond is needed for parents to give care well. In an attempt to characterise the bond of care in the parent-child relationship, Amy Mullin argues that 'parents and children need to manifest their understanding of one another as unique, irreplaceable individuals, with identifiable needs and interests through their interactions with one another' (Mullin 2006, 183). She emphasises the need for reciprocity of caring action within this relationship and I would argue that this reciprocity can be extended to all members of a family; that the demonstration in caring action of the irreplaceability of family members is part of what holds families together. Caring relationships within the family are not only good for childhood development; 'they are also important to the development of the adult caregivers' skills and virtues (which may be exercised outside these relationships as well)' (Mullin 2006, 184). In exercising the skills of parenting, motivated by the positive affective bond, and directed by practical reasoning the parent is able to develop caring virtues. This claim supports the MacIntyrean view that family life is a 'school of the virtues', not just for the children learning to become independent practical reasoners but also for the adults who care for children and other dependent family members.

7.3 The goods of healthy couple relations or supported single parenthood

A second good internal to family life is a healthy relationship between committed couples, and the modern form of this relationship is analogous to Aristotle's idea of character friendship, but with some differences. The relationship between friends is good in itself, from an Aristotelian perspective, when each values the other for his or her own sake. Aristotle's conception of *philia* denies the possibility of true and equal character friendship between spouses because his account of the household presupposes certain ancient Greek social structures and the moral inferiority of women. While he does concede that there is a certain type of *philia* between spouses, it is not one of moral equality, unlike the friendship between male citizens. For Aristotle it is complementary but unequal. As we no longer accept that women are morally and intellectually inferior in contemporary Western society, it seems fruitful to look at Aristotle's conception of true character friendship, which rests on the idea of the friend being loveable without qualification, in relation to spouses. This is surely the ideal for those making and sustaining a family together. Of course, when people live together, so closely, they cannot be expected to achieve perfection in their character and relations with one another. In other words, they are bound to disagree and have arguments from time to time, some more serious than others. Aristotle is not suggesting that one should love another without qualification if they are not a good person. True character friendship, for Aristotle, can only be achieved when both friends are genuinely good and, therefore, such friendship is rare. It might be more useful to modify Aristotle and say that minor character flaws could be overlooked for the sake of family life but if serious flaws are overlooked, to the detriment of one's own good or the good of the family, it could damage familial flourishing. Genuine friends will want to improve each other, however, and we would expect this to also be the case for couples. This argument relates back to Schwarzenbach's Aristotelian argument, discussed in chapter 6 in relation to parent-child relations, where a reciprocal moral equality is the goal of true *philia,* and not just a prerequisite.

Family life is unlikely to flourish on the foundations of an unequal relationship between a couple, even if it manages to survive because it will likely result in irresolvable conflict or

in one or both parties not feeling secure or irreplaceable. Thus it seems that in order to build and sustain a family life which flourishes, it is necessary for the adults who make a family life together to have a strong bond built on the internal goods of reciprocal love, mutual trust and a friendship which entails the wishing of the good for each other's sake, and adapting to changes in one another over time. This does not entail an idealised notion of romantic love which dominates in Western society, packaged and sold to us in the form of advertising and products, but rather a mutual admiration, respect and care for each other's character and wellbeing. This may be initially motivated by romantic love or attraction but does not require this to sustain it; though arguably it does require some kind of enduring affection and sexual compatibility if it is to be sustained over a complete life. The parents' affection, in a flourishing relationship will express the value of each other's contribution to the life of the family, such that neither parent feels like they do all the work.

Aristotle also identifies two other inferior species of friendship; one based on utility and one based on pleasure (see chapter 1). He argues that neither of these can last beyond the usefulness or pleasure that the friends afford to each other. Therefore, if the relationship between people who want to have a family together is based on either pleasure or utility alone, this too seems to be a shaky foundation on which to build a family life. Nevertheless, one would expect to find both usefulness and pleasure in true character friendship. For example, partners may be useful to each other in terms of financial support, if one adult has to take time off to study or is incapacitated by illness. One would also expect to find that partners find pleasure in each other's company and want to spend time together in common pursuits and activity. Furthermore, one would expect there to be sexual compatibility in order that partners can develop bonds of intimacy which further strengthens their relationship with one another. However, a relationship based on sex purely for pleasure in the context of family life would not guarantee this strengthening of intimate bonds. The difference between character friendships and the morally inferior friendships discussed by Aristotle is that true friendship does not seek pleasure or utility as an end itself. While people should be free to do this in other aspects of life such as relationships built on business transactions or casual friendships, it seems that these inferior friendships are not good grounds for a flourishing family life due to their impermanence and fragility. Furthermore, adults who choose to live together as a family will be more successful in their common ends if they

value all that the other brings to the relationship and if they view their relationship as one of interdependence. If one partner continues to value their independence more than their relationship then that will inevitably lead to a lack of reciprocity, mutual trust and the advantages of deliberation with another on whose wisdom one can draw.

Is there something distinctively good about conjugal relationships which make them distinguishable from platonic friendships? Apart from the potentiality for having children in such a relationship, a familial commitment is more unconditional than that of friendship. What we are prepared to do and to sacrifice for a spouse or partner, for someone we are in love with and are committed to long-term, differs from what we are prepared to do for a friend or someone we are dating. Of course this is dependent on the relationship flourishing. The love needs to be mutual and not obsessive or blind to rationality. It is not easy to describe the concept of mutual and stable love between partners. What we can say is that one loves one's spouse or partner in a quite distinct way from how one loves one's friends. Friedrich Engels characterises this love between spouses as 'sex love' and argues that it only becomes a feature of family life in modernity. In earlier epochs, when parents chose who their children were to marry, spousal love was based more on duty and obligation than sexual desire, love and friendship:

> The idea that the mutual inclinations of the principal parties should be the overriding reason for matrimony had been unheard of in the practice of the ruling classes from the very beginning. Such things took place, at best, in romance only, or - among the oppressed classes, which did not count (Engels 1968, 514).

Furthermore, sexual desire (*eros*) as understood by the ancients, did not presuppose mutual love. In modern love there is not the asymmetry of the lover and beloved, as described by Aristotle. Mutual equal love based on character friendship and genuine affection is, therefore, a necessary condition of the flourishing of committed sex-love relationships. If one removes oneself from the relationship and no longer reciprocates then the relationship is transformed and the roles constitutive of it cease to exist. Unrequited love only exists in the mind and is not actualised in relationship form.

The goods of family life that we consider to be important will also differ from the goods which hold families together in other cultures, and at different times in history. We cannot say, therefore, that these are the only goods of family life; that these goods, pursued in a particular way are the key to good familial functioning. For some families in

different cultural or historical contexts, the quality of the relationship between the women of a kinship group may be more important than the quality of the relationship between spouses. However, it does seem that participation in the practice of family life, in some form, is more conducive to flourishing than not participating, particularly if we are not able to construct some kind of familial substitute. Crucial to an Aristotelian perspective is that human beings are social as well as political animals. We desire intimate relationships, people with whom to share our lives. As social animals we value relationships with others but according to evolutionary anthropologists, like Robin Dunbar, our brains are only capable of coping with a finite number of meaningful relationships involving trust, reciprocity and obligation. Moreover, he argues that the quality of the relationship deteriorates as the social group widens (Dunbar 2010). We might infer from this that our most intimate relationships have the potentiality for being the highest quality of our relationships and more often than not, our most intimate relationships are familial in nature.

Furthermore, in a globalised world where citizens have to become increasingly mobile in order to find work, true character friendship, as envisaged by Aristotle, between citizens of a political community is harder to find let alone maintain. Perhaps it is more likely to be found now in loving familial relationships. The committed sex-love couple relationship, sustained by marriage, civil-partnership or some other kind of symbolic commitment is one way in which one might satisfy these desires for character friendship and intimacy which constitute our flourishing. However, it is not the only way and many adults successfully raise children in different contexts, for example, as single-parents.

In single-parent families[22], the goods of the conjugal relationship often have to be found in other relationships. The bond between parent and child may become stronger, as might the bonds with extended family such as with siblings and parents. As discussed in the earlier chapter on liberal feminism, some theorists argue in favour of the state privileging the two-parent family. This is because it is believed by some that the two-parent family is the most effective way of bringing up children to be independent citizens. Iris Marion Young claims that in this context independence means,

> having a well-paid secure job sufficient to support oneself and one's children
> at a level that can enable them to develop the capacities and acquire the

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[22] The discussion of single-parents is meant to encompass parents of all genders, though reference may be made to one gender to illustrate an example.

skills to achieve such jobs themselves, and can also provide enough savings so that one does not become dependent on those children or others when one is too old to work (Young 1995, 544).

This privileging of independence ignores the facts of dependence which one inevitably encounters at different life-stages, for example, if one becomes unemployed due to an economic recession or if one contracts a debilitating illness. As MacIntyre has argued, the virtues of rational independence need to be balanced by the virtues of acknowledged dependence. When we are a part of a family, we are never completely independent. Even an economically independent father and husband will depend on his partner for the care of their children; it is not just the partner and child who are dependent on him. If he is a single-parent and continues to work full-time, he will depend on his extended family or child care services to care for his children. The virtues of acknowledged dependence do not just apply to us when we are in a state of obvious dependence on others either. Throughout our lives we rely on the practical reasoning of others, through consulting with those we trust and deliberating on matters affecting common goods. If, as a single-parent, we had no partner who could help us to make decisions about setting rules for our children or who could share childcare with us so that we could both work and participate in activities outside of the home, then we would need to find that kind of support elsewhere.

One important question is what effect does single-parenthood have on children's wellbeing? Young rejects William Galston's claim that single-parent families are always bad for children because they receive less emotional support and less supervision than children of two-parent families. She argues that,

> [While] it is certainly plausible to claim parenting is easier and more effective if two or more adults discuss the children's needs . . . it does not follow that the second adult must be a live-in husband, however, and some studies have found that the addition of any adult to a single-parent household, whether a relative, lover, or friend, tends to offset single-parent tendencies to relinquish parental decision making too early (Young 1995, 540).

Thus having another adult with whom to deliberate and on whom one can depend does not necessarily require one to have a married partner. Families do not exist in a vacuum. Therefore, single-parents will often have other support on which they can draw such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or close friends.

An isolated single-mother who has no contact with the father of her child and no support on which to draw should be of concern to any society, both for the sake of the mother and of the child, but not as someone who should be demonised. The main mechanism by which many single-parents are helped in Western countries by the state is through welfare payments. However, a single-parent may need help other than financial welfare to help raise her children, and institutions outside the family could play a role in this. Support networks of single-parents who live near one another or local authorities helping to keep extended families together when placing people in care homes might be encouraged.

While it may be the case that in general it is better to have a partner with whom to raise a child, there are also many situations in which it can be damaging to the flourishing of the family and its members. In such circumstances a strong case can often be made that divorce or separation, which may cause short-term pain, may secure long-term flourishing if the right conditions are in place. Kristi Williams concludes from her study on psychological wellbeing and marriage that 'Being in a satisfying, supportive marriage offers similar benefits to women and men, and exiting such a marriage or being in a strained marriage confers similar costs' (Williams 2003, 483). Her findings suggest, firstly, that the quality of married life rather than marital status is more important for the wellbeing of both men and women, contrary to previous assumptions that status mattered more than quality to men. Secondly, they suggest that sometimes it is better to divorce for the sake of future wellbeing than stay in a difficult and strained relationship if the problems which characterise it cannot be overcome. Moreover, a number of studies argue that the quality of parental relationships is more important to the wellbeing outcomes of children than avoiding divorce and remaining in a strained relationship (Hair et al. 2009; Davies 2002). The need for extended family, friends, and reliable neighbours is important for the wellbeing of any family but becomes necessary for a single parent family to flourish.

7.4   The goods of care and support for adult dependency

Finally, in this chapter, it is argued that family life supports the goods of care and support for dependent adults. While Archard argues that the primary function of family life is the care, guidance and protection of children, this thesis argues that the family's functions

are wider and extend beyond childhood. The well functioning family, which affords security to all of its members, is a family that is there for its members when they need it most. Whether we are talking about a wife who has lost her job, an elderly parent who can no longer live alone, a daughter who becomes pregnant or a son who is trying to live independently with a disability, family life can provide the security they need to carry on with their lives when they encounter dependency. However, in order for the family to flourish and to be there when a particular family member needs support, the family cannot simply be a means to an individual end or a source of collective goods which family member can help themselves to. It requires all family members to care about its continuation and to contribute to its functioning. Characteristic of family members is to go above and beyond what is expected of them in their multifarious roles, for example, when grandparents contribute to parenting their grandchildren or when children take care of their parents during an illness or in old age.

Finding the right balance between dependence and independence, which is so important when a child is growing up, is also important for dependent adults. Adults who take care of or assist elderly parents have to find the right balance between leaving their parents to look after themselves and infantilising them. In countries with aging populations, many children will see their parents suffer from age-related diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia. Finding the right level of care which affords them the most independence for as long as possible has to be balanced against the needs of one's own children and the demands of a working life. Furthermore, the needs of a child with disabilities who reaches adulthood are very particular. A few decades ago, many disabilities were poorly understood and adults often found themselves in mental institutions or care homes for elderly people when they could have been living semi-independently. In doing so, the capacities they did have were not developed as far as they could have been. Striking the right balance between dependence and independence is hard and can require a great deal of professional assessment and advocacy, particularly with cognitive disability. Nevertheless it can and should be found so that those of us with disabilities are treated as persons, with all the capacities of a person who is both mentally and physically able, even if all of those capacities cannot be fully realised in the usual way. For MacIntyre,

> It matters . . . that those who are not yet disabled by age recognize in the old what they are moving towards becoming, and that those who are not ill or

injured recognize in the ill and injured what they often have been and always may be. It matters also that those recognitions are not a source of fear (1999, 146).

What he means is that these recognitions are a source of understanding about our common needs and common goods. It means that those who are disabled, sick or injured, however permanent or impermanent their condition, are recognisable as us and not as the Other. Not recognising this leads to the dehumanisation of the disabled, the sick and the elderly. Many families may be guilty of abandoning their elderly parents or disabled adult children in care homes or other institutions out of fear of the vulnerability of the human condition and denial of the possibility that it might happen to them too. This is not to suggest that, out of guilt, all families should look after their dependent adult family members in their own homes. Rather it is to suggest that care institutions at best supplement family life, cultivate friendships and enable a decent level of physical and mental independence according to the capacities of the adult in care. If they are a place that families can leave those members who illustrate all too vividly human vulnerability, to be forgotten about or to be hidden from view, then care institutions are not functioning well and those families are failing to flourish.

In the conclusion of chapter 3 I tentatively suggested that liberal perfectionism's concern with autonomy as an intrinsic human good was worthy of further exploration from an Aristotelian perspective. For Raz, autonomy is partial authorship over one's own life. MacIntyre is not ignorant of the importance of this authorship and dedicates a great deal of space to discussions of independent practical reasoning and developing the ability to stand back from one's immediate desires in order to reason about what is good for *me* to do. However, we often find ourselves in situations where, no matter how well we are able to reason about our good and stand back from our desires, we are not able to do what is good for us; only what is good for another who is in our care. Furthermore, if we are a somewhat dependent adult (and here I am thinking of adults with cognitive disabilities) we may not be able to stand back from our desires or reason to our full capacity as humans. In such cases, autonomy in Raz's sense, as a non-individualistic concept, seems to be a necessary enabling good. To be autonomous is to be free from subjection, subordination and servitude. As suggested previously, for family life to flourish, the good of some cannot be sacrificed for the good of others. Yet many caregivers give up on other projects which are important to them, which contribute to their own flourishing, for the

sake of caring for a dependent family member. This can be true of parents who are said to live for their children but it is more acute when the caregiver has to care for a dependent adult whose limited independence decreases with age or with the progression of a terminal illness. While the caregiver might not have been forced by the power of another into servitude, nonetheless, they often feel they have no choice, and a lack of external goods often limits the caregiver's options even further. While caregiving can be an integral part of a flourishing human life, if it becomes overly burdensome and damages the caregivers ability to pursue other projects alongside caregiving, then it can harm flourishing and the good of the family. This is one reason why families need to share the burden of care with one another and, where that is not possible or where that is not enough, they also need external institutions of care to support them and provide relief. As discussed in chapter 6, caring about someone does not require that we directly and physically care for them. We may respond to our affective disposition of caring about that person by making sure that they have what they need to live in the way that is most suited to them. We may take care of their financial concerns or we may visit them regularly to maintain familial bonds, combat loneliness and check that they are content and being well cared for. The power of partial authorship over one's own life is therefore important for both the giver and receiver of care. Caregiving should enable the cared-for person to live as independently as possible such that they can exercise their capacities to their fullest potential but it should not result in the caregiver living-for the cared-for person. Easy access to respite care which takes into account both the needs of the caregiver and the cared for is one way in which autonomy might be enabled. Autonomy, in Raz's sense, is therefore a good for human beings but it is an enabling good; a capacity which we have as human beings, which we are not born with but must cultivate and help others to achieve. It requires certain external goods and support from others in order to be exercised. It also requires some capacity for independent practical reasoning, or an advocate who pursues the independent adult's interests, in order to be used effectively to direct our activity.

The good that families can provide, of care and support for adult dependency, is dependent on various factors being in place. The first is that the right balance between dependence and independence is struck such that dependent adults are not infantilised, nor are they abandoned or hidden away. Secondly, that disability in all of its forms is understood as something which can happen to any human being in virtue of our

vulnerability and, therefore, that the needs of the sick, elderly and otherwise disabled are part of our reasoning about the common good of both families and wider communities. Thirdly, that caregivers are adequately supported by the wider family and that institutions outside of the family are made available to them so that they can continue to pursue other worthwhile projects alongside caregiving, and are not entirely consumed by the activity. Alongside care for the caregiver, there must also be the conditions to enhance the autonomy of dependent adults such that they are able to fully exercise their capacities and pursue worthwhile projects. This requires a combination of support from a caring family and healthy, caregiving institutions which promote friendship formation, physical and mental independence and the involvement of families in the lives of the cared for. Where there is no family to speak of, and a dependent adult lives in an institution, the institution should not be ignorant of the lack of family support and should do whatever is necessary to promote healthy relationships with paid caregivers and other residents. Where a dependent adult lives in their own home and has no family, then it is incumbent on that person's neighbours and paid caregivers to include the dependent person in the life of the community.

7.5   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined what a flourishing family life involves. I have argued that the highest good of family life is that the family functions well such that all family members are afforded the security to act outside of the family. Various goods are ordered towards this highest good and I have examined three of those goods here, though there may be many more. The first is that in raising children, they are cared for well both physically and morally. This is achieved through play, trusting and being trustworthy, and caregiving. These activities and behaviours are both good in themselves and are good for the sake of raising children well. In order for children to be raised well, however, it might not be sufficient that parent-child relationships are healthy, though this is of course necessary. For children to be enabled to play with their peers safely, parents must also have access to good schools, playgroups, extended family members who can keep a watchful eye on playing children or safe places to live with trustworthy neighbours. The more or these support networks and external institutions that families have access to, the more familial flourishing is enabled.

The second good I have identified, which a flourishing family life supports and is supported by, is healthy couple relations. Healthy couple relations are characterised by a foundation of equal character friendship and reciprocal love, mutual trust, and the ability to adapt to changes in one another over time characterised by commitment to one another. The goods of this relationship are supported by institutions such as marriage or civil partnership and, to a lesser extent, common law marriage. The legally recognised unions distribute external goods conferring status and powers and distributing some wealth, particularly in the event of divorce, through marriage rights. Over time, in the Western world at least, these marriage rights have been increasingly equalised to reflect the increasingly equal status of women and gay people, such that marriage no longer obviously disadvantages women to benefit of men and is increasingly inclusive of same sex couples. The same cannot be said of marriage in all cultures where power is distributed in favour of men and heterosexual unions. Nonetheless, marriage is seen by some as an outdated institution and some couples choose to cohabit long-term. Common law marriage, as it is sometimes known, has only some status attached to it and is modelled along the lines of marriage without the legal benefits. For example, in the UK a mother in a common law marriage has more rights to custody of her child in the event of a separation than the father does (GOV.UK 2013). Where there is no marriage and a child is raised by a single parent, I have argued that the goods of a couple relationship are often found elsewhere if the parent is supported by extended family or reliable friends. Therefore, single parents who are isolated need support from external institutions in wider society in more constructive ways than just being given welfare payments.

The third good identified, which families provide, is support and care for dependent adults. This is a good for both dependent adults and family members. Not only is the family able to provide for dependent adults in a multiplicity of ways but when it does so, this is good for the whole family because it maintains bonds between family members beyond childhood and helps us to recognise our own vulnerability and dependence. Again, in order for the family to flourish in this respect, it requires support from outside of the family, particularly in the form of respite for family caregivers or caregiving institutions, including care homes and care within a person's own home.

The next chapter looks at how families might become dysfunctional or might encounter barriers to flourishing. This will be done in two ways: 1) examination of the ways in which

external goods can become ends in themselves and corrupt the good of family life and 2) looking at how institutions, which are designed to sustain the family, can end up corrupting it.

8. How do Families Fail to Flourish?

8.1   Introduction

Now that we have a general picture of what a flourishing family life involves, it is possible to outline some of the issues which might impair or prohibit families from flourishing. Thus far, I have argued that in order for families to flourish they must pursue the goods internal to the practice of family life. Many family forms are capable of doing this but some will find it easier than others and some will encounter barriers. Below I will discuss some of the ways in which families may fail to flourish or at least the barriers to flourishing.[23] Many of the ways in which families fail to function well, I will argue, is related in some way to external goods. External goods, as has already been explained, are those goods 'that when achieved they are always some individual's property and possession' (MacIntyre 1985, 190). This makes them characteristically scarce goods because the more one person has of them the less others have. Internal goods on the other hand are characteristically 'good for the whole community who participate in the practice' (1985, 190-1). From this understanding of the goods we can see how placing too high a value on external goods might lead a person to be greedy and more self-interested. However, it would be a mistake to suggest that external goods cannot be common goods, or at least collective goods, when used for the benefit of the practice.

When we pursue external goods, those necessary for life and those that supposedly improve it, we always do so *qua* some particular role which may or may not have a competing claim over our roles in the practice of family life. For Aristotle, it was the *oikos* or economic household itself which provided 'such things necessary to life' (*P* I 1256b 30).

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[23] One barrier to flourishing might be the bad character (or vice) of family members. In the previous chapter I discussed the importance of couple relations and the necessary virtues of family members in order for families to flourish. The counterpart to this argument is that bad character and vicious behaviour are likely to prevent families from flourishing. However, as I already discussed the effect of bad character in the previous chapter, in this chapter I focus on institutional and contextual barriers to flourishing.

Furthermore, the household was a constitutive part of the village or kinship group and when several of these were united the city state (*polis*) came into existence 'originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life' (*P* 1252b 30-31). The household aimed at life itself while the *polis* aimed at the good life. For Aristotle and for many pre-modern communities, the household was the site of economic activity – of producing those things needed to sustain human beings. One hunted, toiled or traded for the sake of the good of the household and all those who constituted it. In particular, Aristotle thought that the household and its management should be oriented towards the education of children into the political life of the *polis.* It appears that for Aristotle, it was not so much that there was an intrinsic worth to the relationships fostered within the family but rather that the family served the higher goods of the *polis*. As such Aristotle claimed that the art of household management was not the art of wealth getting for its own sake (i.e. the unlimited acquisition of wealth; what he called the vice of *pleonexia*) but rather to provide those necessary goods which will sustain human life and which are instrumental to the pursuit of human excellence.

Aristotle could see clearly the danger in the pursuit of wealth, and other external goods, for their own sake at the expense of human excellence. This danger seems even more pronounced when we think that wealth-getting is now mostly divorced from the family in modern societies. As such, the supply of the everyday needs of human beings usually has to be achieved through compartmentalised roles outside of, and separate from, family life. The unlimited acquisition of wealth is, therefore, not obviously limited by the internal goods of family life. When an individual takes employment to provide for her family, she takes on a role such as a banker, teacher or shop worker. In her role as banker, teacher, or shop worker she is encouraged to no longer think of herself primarily as a family member. From her employer's perspective, she is an employee first and perhaps a mother, daughter or wife second.

In some ways, this separation of work and family life might be an advantage over the pre-modern economically productive household of Aristotle's time. There is less opportunity, for instance, for family life to be used instrumentally for the pursuit of external goods by exploiting vulnerable family members, such as young children, for labour. Family life, if separated from work, might be seen more as a haven from the drudgery of working life (Lasch 1997) and people may have more opportunity to find intrinsic value in familial

relationships beyond their instrumental worth. However, as the external goods achieved in working life are divorced from the activities of family life, it is harder to see the single causal order those goods make with the internal goods of family life, described in the previous section. The goods of those practices in which we do achieve external goods may compete with the goods of family life. Furthermore, one may be virtuous at home but when one goes to work in certain occupations, the end is often to make as much profit for the company and for oneself as possible, potentially resulting in the vice of *pleonexia* and failing to contribute to the common goods of society, by unjustly taking more than one needs or deserves.

It is clear that how we practice family life and the institutions which support family life have been vastly transformed since pre-modern times. The economic function of the household has been significantly limited or removed in most families and the composition of the household has also transformed. There are few examples of economically productive households (e.g. family farms) in Western democracies and so the practice of family life now has the function of providing stability and a loving environment for children to grow up in, as well as a support network of caring relationships for adults when they are sick, aging, disabled or need support in their various goals. Furthermore, children are not so much prepared for a political life, as Aristotle thought they should be, but rather for a working life. Of course, there are economic and other external benefits and burdens to being part of a family. Pursuit of the benefits for their own sake, for example through marriage or prioritising those benefits for children over the goods internal to family life, can damage flourishing. On the other hand, external goods are indeed goods which are needed to sustain family life and a deficiency of them can also damage familial flourishing. These issues will be explored in this chapter.

8.2 The relationship of external goods to practices

The goods internal to family life, outlined in chapter 7, can only be pursued with the right amount of instrumental or external goods. Without these external goods family carers cannot provide good caregiving and the family cannot function well. The issue of external goods to sustain family life can be addressed by governments. For example, the Family Breakdown Working Group of the Centre for Social Justice think tank states in its briefing paper that 'Extended family relationships are breaking down and the state provides little

or no support and encouragement for them to flourish e.g. by making it financially viable for care of children and the elderly to take place within the family' (Callan 2007). Yet when individuals pursue external goods to sustain family life, in particular the goods *necessary* for life but also including wealth, power and status, which, in moderation, can improve life, it is not usually *qua* family member. As MacIntyre points out, in modern societies we tend to live compartmentalised lives in which one's role as mother is divorced from one's role as a teacher and one's role as member of a club: 'So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal' (1985, 204). Even childhood and old age are made into such distinctly separate spheres of life that they are not seen as part of a narrative whole. Such a fragmented life is antithetical to one in which each role is inseparable from, and informs, the others.

This thesis has instead viewed the good family as both constantly changing and narratively unified, rather than something easily defined by its form, and as constituted by activity and particular relationships aimed at common goods (by examining family life as a practice rather than as a static institution composed of parents and dependent children). This view of the family as evolving makes more sense for looking at the whole human life from beginning to end and how family life shapes, and is a part of, it. Thus in my family life I may be a daughter, a granddaughter, a mother, a sister, a cousin, a girlfriend, a wife, an aunt and a grandmother at different stages in my life and sometimes more than one of these roles simultaneously. Some of these roles may have a greater pull and authority over my choices and activity at different points in my life but they all contribute to the narrative unity of my life alongside my other roles as an academic, a student, a friend etc. In order to determine which roles will have the greatest authority over me at different times I need to be able to reason well about the good and deliberate with others whom I share common goods with.

But what of the roles of different practices other than that of family life and the authority of the goods I pursue in each? Even when a human life is informed by the conception of the virtues as rooted in practices, the individual may still encounter arbitrariness in choosing between different and competing claims of practices:

> Commitment to sustaining the kind of community in which the virtues can flourish may be incompatible with the devotion which a particular practice . . . requires. So there may be tensions between the claims of family life and those

of the arts . . . or between the claims of politics and those of the arts (MacIntyre 1985, 201).

Most people at some point in their life have to make choices between family and work commitments. To weigh up these commitments MacIntyre argues we the need an overriding conception of the *telos* of the whole human life whereby the goods pursued are hierarchically ordered. Human beings need to be able to exercise their faculty of practical reason, through deliberation with others, to order their particular goods. While I am not fully convinced that MacIntyre solves the problems of weighing up and ordering competing and sometimes incompatible goods, his concept of the narrative unity of a human life is still powerfully appealing. It stands in opposition to analytic philosophy which attempts to reduce human action to simple components, ignoring its embeddedness in particular and concrete human circumstances.

In the contemporary Western world, supplying the goods to sustain family life very understandably may not be the only ends for which we work. Employment can provide goods which are worthwhile for their own sake, for example, if I am a scientist and I seek a cure for a life-threatening disease or I develop a new theory. Nonetheless, external goods are usually one product of that work, often in order to attract the most talented to the job, and these goods are then often used to sustain family life either as a parent, or someone's son/daughter or sibling. The pursuit of other worthwhile goods, outside of the practice of family life, is not necessarily harmful to family life. In fact, it is often good for family members because it is important to maintain identities outside of being a parent or someone's son/daughter in order to develop different human capacities for excellence and live a full and flourishing life. Furthermore, a good family life should encourage such activity, as argued in chapter 7. These other goods, however, for example, of science, fine art, building, sport or academic philosophy, may compete with the goods of family life and it may depend on what stage we are at in our lives as to what is prioritised.

Nonetheless, it is clear that we pursue goods in a range of practices including family life. We are rewarded for our work outside of the family with external goods which we then use to support ourselves and, if we have a partner and children or a relative to take care of, our families. Sometimes that work is also rewarding in itself and the goods achieved in that work may compete with the goods of family life and need to be rationally ordered. However, practical reasoning and deliberation also needs to be applied to the ordering of external goods achieved either through our efforts in our jobs or, more rarely, through

the efforts of the household (in the case of family farms or family businesses). The external goods we achieve, if pursued for their own sake, can damage our achievement of the goods internal to family life in a number of ways, which will be discussed in this chapter. Yet without some of those goods families are also unable to pursue the goods internal to family life.

8.3   The potential harm of external goods

When the goods we achieve outside of the family are only external goods, the goods internal to family life can become subordinated to these external goods. For example, a society in which families are bombarded with messages that more consumer goods will make them and their families happier is not conducive to familial flourishing because it prioritises external goods. People often work more outside of the home, not for the sake of the goods internal to their employment activity but because they think having more external goods will make them and their families happier. In doing so, they find they have less time to spend with their family. Moreover, pursuit of these goods when families do not earn enough can lead to the problem of a *lack* of external goods such as debt, poverty and loss of one's home. A family which prioritises consumption over the goods internal to family life is also harmful to children because it teaches them the vices of greed, belief that they can always get what they desire, and poor management of finances.

What I will argue is that family members who are motivated by, and directed towards, the internal goods of family life and have fostered the virtues will not seek external goods at the expense of internal goods. Thus, when a parent goes out to work to earn wages or to produce food, it is not merely for her own good but for the good of some or all of her family members to pay for her children's food, clothes, schooling, toys etc., to contribute to the elder care of her parents, to pay for a family holiday or to support her spouse through a time of unemployment, illness, full-time parenting or adult education. In fact, her own good is inextricably tied up with the good of the practice of family life. If her family life is failing to flourish then she will not be able to live well either. She, therefore, acquires certain basic external goods in order to feed and clothe her children and other dependent family members who may not be able to work themselves due to other responsibilities within the family, such as caregiving, or due to incapacity. She also acquires goods which will give her children the best opportunities for flourishing and

these may be status, forms of power or wealth. Furthermore, if her family is flourishing in the Aristotelian sense, then this will enrich the wider community. The children will grow up to be responsible, caring and thoughtful members of society who have good character and a concern for the common good. Adult family members who are vulnerable and dependent will have strong advocates for their needs and a support network which will enable them to live as independently as they can and participate as much as possible in society.

Nevertheless it is obvious how easily one can become corrupted by these external goods, making them the object of one's desires. Sometimes it seems as if more money, more possessions, fame, power or status will make us happy. We can easily imagine the parent who works all hours of the day, leaving their children with nannies or nurseries in order to have a nice house, expensive holidays and a college fund for the children, but at what cost? If the particular relationships of family life are that for the sake of which families exist and are valued then what good are wealthy powerful parents who spend little or no time with their children or each other? At the other end of the spectrum we can imagine with little difficulty the parent who gets into debt trying to provide all of those things that we are constantly told will make us and our families happy.[24] Living beyond their means, such parents borrow more than they can pay back to provide the house, car, holidays and clothes that will increase their status as a family and supposedly bring them that ever elusive happiness. Yet both of these apparent routes to happiness are more likely to lead to a failure to flourish. The former leads to the pursuit of external goods as ends in themselves at the expense of fostering flourishing relationships, the latter eventually leads to a severe depletion of external goods after the initial acquisition of those goods, and lands families in poverty with spiralling debt. Rawls seems to have been right then to worry about the unjust distribution of benefits and burdens which families contribute to. Just as a family can set you up for life, it can also limit your possibilities and tie you to poverty indefinitely. A child born into poverty is more likely to experience poverty as an adult and pass that on to his or her children, continuing the cycle (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014).

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[24] According to the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) UK households accumulated massive personal debts in the decade leading up to the financial crisis with the total UK personal debt reaching £1.4 trillion by the end of 2010. Despite the financial crisis and a slight fall in personal debt since 2010, the report states that the Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that personal debt as a percentage of household income will rise from the current level of 160% to 175% of household income by 2015 (The Financial Inclusion Centre 2011, 1).

The common goods of family life are achieved through practitioners cultivating the virtues, not only in themselves, but also in those for whom they are responsible in the practice i.e. children. If one or more persons are pursuing external goods only, even if they believe it is for the benefit of the family, they will not be practicing the virtues essential to their own flourishing and the flourishing of the practice. Managing the economy of the household, without an orientation towards the internal goods of family life, could quickly change into the pursuit of wealth-getting. By only pursuing external goods family members might lose sight of the fact that these external goods are subordinate to the internal goods of family life. In doing so they also set an example to their children that the pursuit of external goods is of worth to a human life in itself. As children are unable to reason soundly for themselves, they may learn from their parent(s) or other family members that they desire external goods and a capitalist, consumerist society which fosters self-interestedness, actively encourages this. MacIntyre argues that,

> Families at their best are forms of association in which children are first nurtured, and then educated for and initiated into the activities of an adult world in which their parents' participatory activities provide them both with resources and models (MacIntyre 1999, 133).

If the models of participatory activities prioritise the accumulation of resources or external goods, for example if a parent values wealth above all else or only takes their children shopping on a family day out, then this is what children will be initiated into. As the comparative UNICEF report into child-wellbeing demonstrates, UK children apparently feel trapped in a materialistic culture and engage in high levels of consumption compared with Spanish and Swedish children (Nairn 2011a, 47; Nairn 2011b). Without the support of schools or other community influences, children have fewer opportunities to learn the necessary virtues in order to give care to others, or what is required to be a sound practical reasoner when they are adults. It follows then that they will not flourish in the Aristotelian sense.

However, this description of parents who only pursue external goods does not explain how it comes to be that parents or other family members get drawn into the pursuit of external goods alone and lose sight of the internal goods. One explanation I would like to offer is that the family in the contemporary Western liberal context is often shaped, not by the particular needs required by families for them to flourish, but by the external forces of consumerist capitalism and the state. Advanced capitalism places demands on

families which constrain its structure. It demands that parents work long hours to grow the economy and to meet the financial demands placed on them by consumerism, by constantly leading families to desire more material goods. A great deal of advertising is targeted at families with companies like Nintendo describing their consoles as a way of bringing families together in a common activity (Rosenberg 2009) and many advertisements portraying idyllic happy families, implying that buying their product will bring about this idealised, but ultimately materialistic, happiness. Thus families need more income in order to fulfil these consumerist ideals. Not only does advertising claim that happiness is found in consuming but it is also, according to Arjun Appadurai, 'the key technology for the word-wide dissemination of a plethora of creative, culturally well-chosen ideas of consumer agency' (1990, 307). He goes on to argue that these images of agency which mask a world of merchandising are so subtle that 'the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, when in fact he or she is at best a chooser' (1990, 307).

Children especially, are targeted by advertisers because of the power children have over parents, due to the desire of parents to make their children happy. Furthermore, peer pressure, particularly in adolescence, to have the latest possessions, deeply affects self-esteem and the child's desire to conform to their social group (Isaksen and Roper 2012). The fact that some children from poor homes 'would not talk to someone who was not wearing the right trainers and that they would be embarrassed to be seen with someone wearing unfashionable shoes' (Elliott and Leonard 2004, 357) is one example of children prioritising external goods of status and wealth over the goods of genuine friendship and the virtues. Studies and reports commissioned by UNICEF and the British government demonstrate growing concern about the effect of rampant consumerism on the lives of children and, in particular, the effect that it has on family life (Bailey 2011; Nairn 2011a).

Advanced capitalism also demands that families are geographically mobile; able to move wherever the work is. In doing so it uproots families from local communities and fragments them from extended family relations, in effect, creating the nuclear family and using that family form to sustain advanced capitalism. In a study by Anne Green and Angela Canny on the effects of geographical mobility on family life one participant reported that he and his family, who had already made one move away from extended family support, 'were reluctant to move again and make a similar split from a friendship

network they had built up as a substitute' (Green and Canny 2003, 23). Another participant in her mid-50s who had relocated for her partner's job 'missed seeing her grandchildren and helping her adult children and extended family. She admitted that the family was financially better off having relocated, but her family ties and sense of unfulfilled responsibilities were such that "I would go back in the morning if I could"' (2003, 28). Adults in families that try to stay put when they have extended family ties, or have built up strong community ties, often have to resort to commuting long distances, particularly in dual-career families. This is likely to result in not being able to spend quality time with family members.

Second wave feminist goals were primarily oriented towards freeing women from domestic drudgery and improving their access to the workplace. However, this end, without some orientation to the goods of family life suits capitalism because it grows the workforce. Furthermore, because women tend to still do most of the domestic work (as argued in chapter 4), in particular care work, they provide a workforce of cheaper part-time labour. Perhaps now that feminists are beginning to recognise the value of so-called feminine work and activity (as argued in chapter 5) the aim should be to equalize this activity and draw men and women more towards the practice of family life. In order to do this successfully without reverting to a time when men worked and women looked after the home, there would need to be a cultural shift away from a work obsessed, consumer-driven society. Such a transformation is unlikely, however, in Western societies such as Britain, where economic growth, and therefore an increase in consumption, is needed in order pay down national debts in an economy that is no longer very productive.

8.4   The state, marriage and the family

The state also shapes the practice of family life. It places constraints on who can and cannot marry. It encourages marriage as the basis of family life by rewarding marriage in the tax system or using rhetoric about the importance of marriage and, in doing so, marginalising those who do not marry. Many of the state's demands on the family come from ideological policies of governments who believe that a particular family structure is always the ideal family form and that other forms are deviant or imperfect. The focus of governments on encouraging a particular family structure ignores the complexities of family life; that family life is fluid and constantly changing. More importantly, from an

Aristotelian perspective, this focus on idealised family structures ignores the necessity of the family to meet the needs of family members whatever their structure, to achieve the internal goods of family life and flourish. Within Western liberal democracies, many different types of marriage have emerged from a complicated history. The post-war nuclear family with married parents is often upheld as the most appropriate model for raising children (as argued in chapter 7); though the legal admission of same sex couples into civil partnerships, with the eventual aim to include them in civil marriages, has changed that model somewhat. However, the fact that same sex couples are demanding marriage rights in order to have their commitment fully recognised and to establish families must mean that marriage, whether civil or religious, still has some cultural and social significance. Marriage is thus thought to bring stability and is taken seriously as a key institution of the family in many cultures.

However, other forms of marriage persist and are tolerated with more and more couples living in common law marriages, or cohabiting, and having children out of wedlock due to the removal of social stigma. For example, 'in 2010 there were an estimated 17.9 million families, an increase from 17.0 million in 2001 with an increase of 0.6 million cohabiting couple families and 0.4 million lone parent families offset by a decrease of 0.1 million in the number of married couple families' (Office for National Statistics 2011a). Despite this decrease in civil and religious marriage, however, relationships and commitments between couples often reflect the marital model. Moreover, adoption is permitted and encouraged, single parents are provided with welfare from the state, and child maintenance is demanded from absent parents. Different types of parenting are thus recognised and supported by the liberal state even when there is no legally or religiously sanctified union of parents. As has already been said, in a liberal democratic society it is not for the state to dictate a particular way to live; to value a particular conception of the good. It is, therefore, left to individuals to choose how they make and sustain their family life subject to very specific safeguarding constraints. Children must be educated to a certain standard and should not be sent to work for the family. Children must not be beaten or abused by parents, nor should they be neglected. As Archard argues, parents can choose how to raise their children as long as they give them a minimally decent life and give them the freedom to make their own choices once they become adults.

Paradoxically, however, the liberal state does promote married family life as the best model for raising children, even while it tolerates and, some would argue, encourages other models. Due to the fact that marriage is becoming increasingly informal again and there is now greater importance placed on the care and education of children than there was before 1700s, when marriage became more formalised, state interference has become increasingly necessary to sustain the institution of marriage. If marriage as an institution is insufficient to bear the practice of family life then the state will make up the shortfall because it has an interest in promoting stable families and educating and protecting children who constitute the next generation of workers and citizens. This is not necessarily good for the practice. The more the state interferes in marriage and attempts to promote it the more it is taken out of the hands of the practitioners of family life.

In privileging one family form over others, families are shaped by the demands of status rather than by the internal goods of particular families. High divorce rates are cited by governments as a failure or breakdown of the family itself. However, families continue to exist after divorce and divorce is sometimes, as argued in chapter 7, the only way of securing future flourishing. Parents who stay together but who are in constant conflict can be more harmful to the wellbeing of family life, in particular children, than parents who separate and employ practical reason and deliberation in how they go about the separation. The lack of practical reason and the prevalence of selfish ideas of revenge are more damaging than the separation itself. Moreover, divorce is usually necessary in cases of domestic abuse. The questions that ought to be asked therefore are, firstly, why so many people rush into marriage and having children the first place? If people feel social pressure to marry and have children or feel that they have somehow failed in life if they do not achieve this relatively young then they may not take the time to consider whether their partner is really the person they want commit to and have children with. The fact that one of the main reasons for divorce in the UK is 'growing apart' or 'no longer being in love' suggests that either couples are not compatible in the first place, or that they are not willing to adapt to changes in each other and work at the relationship. Many people also falsely believe that having children will fix their marriage and so children become a means to an end rather than ends in themselves. The second question is: why do certain people abuse and deliberately hurt those closest to them and what can be done to reduce familial violence? I cannot do justice to any attempt at an answer to this question here

but it may require more consciousness-raising, greater access to mental health services, and improvements in how domestic violence is reported and spotted in the first place. Sometimes, however, the breakdown of family life can have a more easily treatable cause.

Material resources and other external goods are needed for families to stand a chance of flourishing. Many families who are deemed to be in poverty in the UK really only have the resources to survive in a limited way, never mind sustain a flourishing family life. The primary cause of child poverty in single-parent households is women's lack of earning power. In general women tend to earn less than men. For example, in 2011 the ONS reported that while the pay gap has narrowed in full-time employment, the median gross annual earnings for men were £28,400 whereas for women they were £22,900 (Office for National Statistics 2011b). However, women are more likely to take part-time work due to child care responsibilities or the fact that labour, traditionally done by women, is often part-time such as secretarial, social care and cleaning work. The statistics for 2011 show that 'for male employees, 88 per cent worked full-time and 12 per cent worked part-time, while the comparable figures for female employees were 58 per cent and 42 per cent respectively' (2011). What the ONS found was that when we look at hourly rates of pay, part-time workers tend to get paid considerably less: 'Median hourly earnings, excluding overtime, of part-time employees were 36.6 per cent less than the earnings of full-time employees in April 2011' (2011).

Another problem is that some single-mothers do not work and are instead full-time parents. Young argues that due to the undeniable fact that single-parent families are more likely to be in poverty, some believe that the cure for childhood poverty is stable, intact, two parent families. Yet Young claims this is a great exaggeration when, in the USA at least, 40 percent of poor families are married couple families (Young 1995). Yet statistics also show that the presence of a partner in the household has a considerable impact on the working status of a mother: 'According to the Labour Force Survey, more than seven in ten (72 per cent) married or cohabiting mothers with dependent children were working in Q2 2008. The comparable figure for lone mothers with dependent children was more than one-half (56 per cent)' (Office for National Statistics 2009). Furthermore, 66 percent of children growing up in poverty in the UK live in a household

where at least one parent works, therefore, employment does not necessarily end child poverty (Alzubaidi et al 2013, 112 [table 4.3db]).

However, if both parents are working it does not necessarily mean that the household will be free from poverty. Even if material circumstances are improved by two parents, it does not entail that a flourishing family life will follow from this; if there is conflict between parents, for example, or if both parents have to work so much that they are unable to dedicate time to their children. Young also points out that married couples usually appoint household and child-rearing duties to mothers, which may explain why they usually take part-time work. Combined with the fact that men tend to have higher wage-earning power this 'means that most economically well-off women and children depend on a male wage to keep them out of poverty' (Young 1995, 542). Therefore, the privileging of marriage by the state and by the New Familialists like Galston, Young argues, leads to the subordination of mothers and dependent children to wage-earning men. This is not a just arrangement because it leaves women and dependents vulnerable if wage-earning men have the potential to take away their wage-earning power and leave mothers dependent on the welfare state. One remedy to this, put forward by the UK centre-right think tank, the Centre for Social Justice, is to make fathers who leave their families contribute, not just financially but practically to child care (Pickles 2010). This approach would entail making fathers who leave their families more responsible for their children. How this would be put into practice is an issue for policy-makers but it would require either penalties for fathers who were not responsible or a more directly interfering approach which aimed to influence, teach or coax men who left their families into taking responsibility for their fatherhood.

8.5   Conclusion

If the making and sustaining of family life is to flourish, then it has to be a socially established cooperative human activity through which parents and other relatives work together to realise the internal goods, and attain the standards of excellence that the activities of family life entail. This can apply to families of different types from married, two-parent families, to single parent families, to step-families, particularly if all family types have good extended family bonds. From MacIntyre's point of view it is for the practitioners to exercise practical reason through deliberation with other family members

to determine the ordering of goods and the means to achieving those goods. Where there are those who cannot have a voice in deliberation then their good must be represented. Families flourish in different ways and to different degrees, at different stages in the life of the family. This is why the state cannot be too heavy-handed in its family policy, picking and choosing what families it supports and privileges, and which it punishes through legislation. Each family encounters different circumstances both material and relational which affect their chances of flourishing.

This chapter has picked out just some of the ways that family life encounters barriers to flourishing, particularly in relation to external goods. Thus when goods external and contingent to family life are prioritised over the goods internal to family life outlined in the previous chapter, then the overall good functioning of family life is damaged. Children who are encouraged to value material goods, status and wealth over goods internal to practices are likely to become alienated from the activities of family life or at least see family life as a means to their external ends. This can come about as a result of parents believing that buying their children what they want will make them happy, children feeling pressured by their peers, a culture which is built on consumerism and glorifies material possessions as status symbols and the means to happiness, or a combination of all of these factors. Consumerism also places pressures on adults who are made to think, through subtle directed advertising, that they are agents in control of their lives, when all they can be is choosers between different packaged lifestyles. As a result they believe that their consumer choices are actually independent rational choices that they have made for the benefit of their family. Global consumer capitalism also demands that the workforce is geographically mobile, able to move to where the work is with little concern for the effects this has on extended family ties and being part of a community.

Moreover, at different life stages the ends of family life change so that instead of raising a child one might be caring for elderly parents, or providing supplementary care for a nephew or grandchild. This way of looking at the practice of the making and sustaining of family life attends to its nuances and particularities, rather than claiming that a good family is of a particular form or that the good family is one free from certain defects. What is needed for families to flourish then are the virtues and an orientation towards the internal goods of family life in order to resist the corrupting power of external goods and familial institutions used to attain external goods. However, I have also tried to show

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that external goods and institutions of the family are not all bad and are actually necessary for the continued functioning of family life. Families need external goods in moderation and institutions, of marriage and of state welfare, are well-placed to secure those goods for families. It may be that we also need new institutions, or to re-design old ones, in order to support the wide variety of families that make up our societies. With high divorce rates and increasingly atomised families, perhaps we need public institutions which minimise the impact on children of divorce, which help extended families to stay connected or which help single-parents to form strong local networks of support. In the UK and some other Western countries, the institution of marriage has been redesigned to include same sex unions for the first time. This came about through grassroots organisation and because same sex couples wanted to start families and have the same power as heterosexual couples to protect and sustain their families. This is just one example of how our institutions can be changed.

9. Conclusions

In this thesis, I have explored what a flourishing family life involves from a feminist Aristotelian perspective. In doing so, I applied MacIntyre's theoretical framework of social practices to the family. According to MacIntyre, through practices, humans pursue common goods constitutive of a flourishing life. I argued that in order to give an account of the goods internal to the practice of family life, we need to integrate the particular insights of feminist care ethics with MacIntyre's Aristotelian virtue ethics. I then applied this approach to the question of what a flourishing family life involves by outlining some of the key goods internal to family life. Finally, I suggested some ways in which families are prevented from flourishing through the pursuit of external goods as ends in themselves.

Using an Aristotelian approach, as I have done by building on MacIntyre, allows practitioners of family life, those writing about the family and those who work with families, to differentiate between those goods which make family life worthwhile and those goods which are necessary to sustain family life. Those goods which make family life worthwhile are those internal goods which are achieved through participation in the activity of family life; the activity being constitutive of the good for human beings as such. I have argued that this is primarily caring activity including forming and sustaining bonds of affection, friendship, trust and security. The activity of family life also includes, as MacIntyre suggests, introduction to and participation in institutions outside of but coextensive with the family which are the bearers of a range of other practices constitutive of human flourishing.

The external goods, those goods needed to sustain family life, are subordinate to the goods internal to family life. This is important for understanding both what makes a good family and what families need in order to live well. One does not have to be an Aristotelian to accept these conclusions. What I have shown is the strength of MacIntyre's approach for explaining these features of family life. Furthermore, I have explored other contemporary moral theories which can provide insights lacking in the Aristotelian approach, such as the importance of partial authorship over one's own life as emphasised by perfectionist liberals and the unequal division of caring labour between the sexes highlighted by liberal feminists. In particular, one of the problems with Aristotle is the

perception of dependence as a weakness and, as a result, the lack of attention to caregiving and caring virtues. However, I have also argued that using a MacIntyrean approach can help us to develop a different kind of language for dealing with questions of social justice. One in which rights and autonomy are not abstract concepts but rather social goods external to practices which can be instrumental in different ways to the flourishing of practices, or can become detrimental to practices when pursued as ends in themselves along with other forms of power, status and wealth.

What I have shown is that a well-functioning family should not be defined negatively, by what it is not. The good family is not just one where the defects of the dysfunctional family are absent. Thus, we cannot say that a good family is one without a single-parent, or one without an obsession with consumer goods, or one without violence or conflict. These factors may pose real threats to flourishing but because of this a theory needs to spell out what flourishing involves first so we can they say how these barriers are overcome and how these threats can be resisted.

An Aristotelian virtue ethics approach spells out what the goods of family life are for human beings and how family life can be a constitutive part of human flourishing when it functions well, in accordance with excellence. The pursuit of the internal good of family life is actualised through the participatory activities of caregiving and receiving and activities within the family which develop our moral and intellectual capacities, from an early age, with play, the exercise of basic practical reason and empathy, through to caring for other family members later in our lives (as shown in chapter 7). This kind of activity, which is social in nature, develops not only good character and strong social bonds but also provides resources to cope with what life throws at us and to resist or overcome many of the barriers to our flourishing. However, no matter how resilient and virtuous we are, some barriers, which are a result of bad fortune, cannot be overcome without structural changes at the level of society. It is incumbent on those who recognise the importance of support for families, beyond the family itself, who need to persuade the wider political community of the implications of this through examples of where families already receive practical support and of where families can be engaged participants in community life.

In answer to the thesis question, '*what does a flourishing family life involve?*' which motivated the project, I answer that it is a family which enables family members to

achieve their goods in common. It provides membership of a foundational social group which offers its members the security to act outside of family life as well as to feel that each of them is irreplaceable within family life. I have argued that the flourishing family has to provide more than 'the care, guidance and protection of children', though this must be one of its functions. If the function of family life was limited to the care of children, then there would be no need for the practice of family life to continue once a child reached adulthood, unless the child was severely cognitively impaired. I have looked to Aristotle who argues that human beings are naturally social and that we form families not only for reproductive purposes but also for those things necessary to sustain life. Drawing on care ethics I have shown that caregiving is an essential activity of human relationships and that it is this activity in accordance with excellence, rather than the requirements of justice or friendship alone, which holds families together. The family's good is also found in the care of vulnerable and dependent adults. All human beings are vulnerable to dependence and, therefore, we should treat that dependence as a fact of human existence rather than as something belonging to the Other. Where people are dependent and are also deprived of the attentive affectionate regard of others then those that are not so deprived have an obligation to meet the needs of those who are. Being part of a family which functions well enables us to know what it is to be regarded attentively and affectionately and to treat others outside of the family with similar care.

A related function then is a moral and political education beginning in childhood and continuing throughout adulthood. Most of this education will take place in childhood to prepare us for adulthood and the wider social and political life. Our moral and political education is not something given to us as a set of lessons by parents but is encountered in all of the activities of every day family life from how to control our appetites and take only what we need, to play with parents and other children, to learning how to do things and make decisions independently (a process which in itself is dependent on others), to taking care of another vulnerable and dependent human being whether he or she is a parent, grandparent, spouse, sibling or one's own child. A moral education will also demonstrate excellence in activity – not just how to do such and such but how to do it well. Furthermore, a political education is not about choosing a political party which best represents one's own beliefs but instead will enable a person to be able to make fundamental decisions about common goods and how they should be ordered and achieved, through shared deliberation with others who participate in a co-operative

practice. The good achieved is that the family *enables its members to act within and outside of the family according to their full moral and intellectual potential.* Each constitutive activity of family life which aims at some internal good is an activity which cultivates virtue, such that the family member of a flourishing family is one who has developed, or is developing, a settled but complex set of character traits which are good in themselves and direct the person towards good actions according to the particular situation. A flourishing family life not only prepares individuals for life outside of the family but also continues to support them in their various activities throughout their lives.

To illustrate briefly how the family prepares and sustains the individual I refer to the different activities of family life identified in this thesis and the standards of excellence which pertain to those activities. Firstly, familial caregiving needs to be compassionate, friendly, patient, generous, trusting, forgiving, trustworthy, affectionate and respectful. At times, other virtues and powers will be needed such as courage, perseverance and tolerance. Activity in accordance with empathy, being able to feel with and understand the position of another human being, is necessary in order to cultivate such virtues. A moral and political education needs to be just, rational (good reasons need to be given beyond reward and punishment) and deliberative. Virtues and powers of temperance, frugality, industry, perseverance, respect and self-respect, justice and friendliness will both be embodied in and taught through the actions of those who provide the education. The activities of educating and of being educated require action in accordance with reason. We must be able to provide good reasons for rules and for why something should be done in this way or that, even if to begin with we teach moral lessons through reward and punishment. However, we may also become educated through our own activity such as when we are faced with a vulnerable and entirely dependent baby for the first time or if our spouse develops a disease of the mind or body which renders them dependent on us for the rest of his or her life.

Arguably many of these standards of excellence already exist within the practice of family life in our society which is how we might think we know intuitively if a family is a bad family or not. It may be easier to identify a family which is not flourishing but it is more difficult to achieve flourishing when family life encounters and throws up so many problems. After all, the practice of making and sustaining family life is one characterised by fragility, dependence and vulnerability. The more dependent people are the more

vulnerable they are to exploitation or neglect. Furthermore, obviously bad families are few and far between but families which meet basic needs without doing so well are harder to identify and the moral damage they cause may not be as apparent as are physical bruises and scars.

MacIntyre's conceptual framework which I have used in this thesis also demonstrates the power of external goods over families. External goods are those goods necessary to life which families share with their own family members, particularly dependent ones such as children or dependent adults. These goods however are often mistakenly thought to bring happiness in their own right. The thought is that the more wealth, status and power one has the happier one will be. It may be the case that having more of these goods will enable one to pursue activities which contribute to overall wellbeing but as ends in themselves they cannot be constitutive of flourishing because the desire for them can never be satisfied; one can always get more. Furthermore, it is not just how much of these goods one has but also how they are used. We can use external goods for good or bad ends whereas internal goods are good in themselves. One might have enough external goods to live a flourishing life but may not put them to good use. Money can be squandered; status and power can be abused. How they are acquired is also relevant. External goods can be put to good use even when acquired viciously. In the context of the family, parents may use their external goods in the service of caring well for their children or elderly parents but if they acquired it viciously, through extortion, theft, or exploitation then this will have a corrupting effect on their characters and consequently on the practice. Thus families need external goods to survive but in order to resist the corrupting effects of external goods they need the virtues.

The work I have presented represents an original contribution to knowledge in that it builds on MacIntyre's Aristotelian conceptual framework of practices and applies it to the particular practice of family life. In doing so, I have been able to propose an answer to the question of what a flourishing family life involves. What a well-functioning family life entails is of great concern to a wide range of individuals, groups and institutions and particularly to the modern state. Focussing on family structure is unhelpful before we have established what the goods of family life are, particularly when, as I have argued, many different forms of family life can achieve flourishing. Furthermore, when we talk of functioning in relation to practices, it becomes not merely the functioning of individuals

but rather the collective purpose of the practice and thus the responsibility of practitioners and the institution which sustains the practice. It may be that the good functioning of families is better achieved through small communities where practitioners have a greater deliberative role, as MacIntyre suggests, or it may be that this approach can filter through education, psychological therapies, government policies, charitable organisations and institutions of welfare.

This work also does not claim to represent the definitive Aristotelian position, but instead takes inspiration from the dynamic tradition of Aristotelian thought and corrects or builds on a specific approach to Aristotelianism by incorporating the insights of other theoretical perspectives. Care ethics, in particular, provides resources which are compatible with virtue ethics and which improve the standpoint of Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Further research, which builds on the premises established here, could be more empirical. Areas, in particular, which would be worth exploring further might be how real families resist the corrupting effects of external goods or the reasons people give for familial breakdown. While reasons for divorce vary widely from lack of compatibility and growing apart to infidelity I would expect to find that some of the reasons cited would relate to abuses of external goods in some way, either through the excessive use of power by one family member over another, lack of resources through unemployment or debt, overemphasis on external goods, and overworking as a result, or reckless uses of external goods. Other research could look at how a particular institution outside of the family might work to support the family either through education, social work or charitable community organisations.

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