

Partiality We Owe Our Employers

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Many employers make great efforts to be treated favorably by their employees, in part to avoid employee turnover¹ and productivity losses.² Phrased differently, employers are interested in being treated partially by their employees. Generally speaking, employers do not want employees to consistently seek their own utility maximization, seeking out opportunities with other employers to the detriment of their current employer. Nor do employers want employees who do only the minimum to satisfy their contractual agreements. Instead, employers want employees who are dedicated to them, work above and beyond duty for their benefit, and care about what happens to them.

This chapter's project is to present three reasons why employees owe partiality to their employers.³ If employees do owe partiality to their employers, there are reasons for employees to be partial to their employer independent of their employer's efforts. There is an analogy between the work in this chapter and the work on Business Ethics in general. Employers might be interested in taking action to nudge their employees to act in morally upright ways, but much

¹ Estimates for how much employee turnover costs companies vary widely, from one half of the employee's annual salary (McFeely and Wigert 2019; O'Connell and Kung 2019) to over two times the employee's annual salary (Heinz 2020). This discrepancy is likely due to what other factors are considered. Factors that can be considered include recruiting costs, training time, loss of time of the trainers, lost productivity of the new employee, error costs of a new employee, lost engagement of other employees who see someone quit, and cultural impact—others examine why the former employee quit (Bersin 2013).

² Cox (2021) estimates that U.S. employers spend \$550 billion each year on employees' lack of engagement, and Harter (2022) reports that only 36% of employees were engaged at work in 2021.

³ It is also worth noting that it may very well be that employers have obligations of partiality toward their employees, but that topic is not addressed in this chapter.

One might initially object to this thesis that I cannot have an obligation to my employer as a legal entity, since individuals do not have responsibilities to pure legal entities. I maintain that one can have responsibilities to legal entities (e.g., to repay a debt). But if one insists against this, let "employer" be general enough to specify an entity that constitutes the legal entity, e.g., the group that constitutes the employer. Thank you to Steve Darwall, Grant Rozeboom, Teresa Kouri Kissel, Andrew Kissel, and Yvette Pearson for conversation about this point.

work on Business Ethics discusses whether employees themselves have an obligation to act in morally upright ways in the workplace independent of employers' efforts. This chapter likewise presents reasons why employees themselves have an obligation to be partial to their employers independent of their employers' efforts to get employees to act partially toward their employer.

Further, an investigation into why and when employers ought to be partial to their employees will reveal conditions employers need to meet in order for employees to have reasons to owe partiality to their employers. If employers wish to make efforts to be treated partially by their employees, employers should heed those conditions.

While considering reasons that employees owe partiality to their employers, this chapter will ignore general duties⁴—duties individuals have to every employer—and contractual duties—duties that employees have to their employers in virtue of their voluntary agreements. Partiality involves more than adherence to general duties to employers or adherence to one's contractual obligations. For example, parents have an obligation to be partial to their children, and that obligation is not because their child is just any child nor because of any agreements the parents have made with their children. This chapter will thus ask whether there are reasons independent of one's general duties or contractual agreements for employees to owe partiality to their employers.

In what follows, I first describe, in Section 1, what it looks like for an employee to display owed partiality to their employer. In that section, I also make precise the main question to be answered in this chapter and describe the method for answering that question. Then, in Sections 2-4, I propose three reasons why an employee owes partiality to their employer (whom, I assume,

⁴ Aside from general duties, we also have special duties: duties we have only to those particular people with whom we have had certain significant sorts of interactions or to whom we stand in certain significant sorts of relations. Obligations to be partial to employers are thus special duties.

is fulfilling their obligations to the employee). I do so by drawing from literature on paradigmatic examples of relationships in which one party is obligated to be partial to another. In the conclusion, I synthesize the three reasons given in Sections 2-4 and enumerate the conditions that employers must fulfill in order to provide employees with reasons that obligate employees to be partial to their employers.

1. What Partiality Looks Like and What It Is

In this section, I first describe what partiality looks like in both paradigmatic relationships of partiality and in employee/employer relationships. I then articulate the main question to be answered in the remainder of this chapter and describe the method for answering that question.

1.1 What Partiality Looks Like

What does it look like for someone to be partial toward another when that partiality is obligatory? The answer involves two parts. The first concerns the way one acts or has attitudes toward others toward which one is partial. The second concerns how one's obligation to be partial interacts with other obligations one might have.

Concerning the first part, partiality is shown through one's actions, feelings, and attention.⁵ First, our partiality manifests itself through acting positively toward the targets of our partiality. If I am partial to my father, I am inclined to provide company to my father if he wants company, but I am not as inclined to provide company to a stranger's father when he wants my company. Similarly, if I am partial to my employer, I am inclined to take on extra hours when my employer wants me to work extra hours even if I am not inclined to work extra for another employer were

⁵ This paragraph follows the list in Lord 2016.

they to want my help. Second, our partiality manifests itself through feelings toward the target of our partiality. I am more saddened by my father's degenerating health than I am toward a stranger's degenerating health. Similarly, if I am partial toward my employer, I feel more sadness about their languishing and more elation toward their success than I do toward the languishing or success of other employers. Finally, our partiality manifests itself through our attentional patterns. I am more inclined to pay closer attention to information about my father's health than I am to a stranger's health. Similarly, if I am partial toward my employer, I am more inclined to pay attention to news about my employer out of interest in how the employer is doing than I am to pay attention to news about other employers.

An employee who is not partial toward their employer does not display any of these actions or attitudes. A nonpartial employee might show up to work and do only what they are contractually obligated to do in order to earn a paycheck, all while being disinterested about their employer. Similarly, if I were not partial toward my father, I might act toward him just as I would a stranger's father, doing only what is required to fulfill the agreements I have made with him. Alternatively, an employee who is not partial toward their employer might consistently seek their own utility maximization, seeking out opportunities to the detriment of their current employer. Such an employee would not put in extra hours or pay attention to the news of their employer, for example, unless such behaviors would benefit oneself.

Concerning the second part (how one's obligation to be partial interacts with other obligations one might have), if we are obligated to be partial toward another, our duties toward the object of our partiality are stronger than the duties we have toward others.⁶ This strength can take four forms. First, if we are obligated to be partial toward some entity, our obligations to that

⁶ The list here follows Scheffler 2003, ch. 3.

entity are less easily overridden due to costs. I might be obligated to incur greater costs to prevent harm from coming to my mother than I would to prevent harm coming to a stranger's mother. Similarly, I might be obligated to incur greater costs to prevent losses coming to my employer (outside of my contractual obligations) than I would to prevent losses coming to another employer.

Second, one's positive duties to the target of our partiality take precedence over positive duties to others when they conflict. For example, I might be obligated to save my drowning mother even if it means I am thereby unable to save a drowning stranger. Similarly, I might be obligated to help a coworker for the sake of my employer (outside of my contractual obligations) even if it requires that I am unable to help out a different company's employee, assuming I have obligations to help both.

Third, my obligation toward the target of my partiality might override a negative duty toward another. I might, for example, be obligated to help my mother even if it means imposing a small harm on another person. For example, I might save a spot in line for my mother, even if it results in a longer wait time for those behind me in line. Similarly, I might be obligated to benefit my employer even if it means imposing a small harm on another employer or if it means taking me away from another person with whom I have agreed to spend time.

Finally, it might not be permissible to impose a small harm on the target of our partiality to prevent a worse harm to another. I might permissibly impose a small harm on a stranger to prevent a worse harm to another stranger, but perhaps I should not harm my father to prevent a worse harm to a stranger. For example, if my father and a stranger were competing for a job and the stranger needed it more, it might still be impermissible for me to advise the potential employer not to give my father the job. Similarly, even if it is permissible to impose a small harm on one employer to prevent a worse harm to another employer, perhaps it is not permissible to

impose a small harm on my employer to prevent a worse harm to another employer. For example, if my employer and another employer were competing for a contract and the other employer needed it more, it might be impermissible for me to advise the potential contractor not to give my employer the contract.

In subsequent sections, I will provide reasons that employers have an obligation to be partial to their employers. We should, however, be more precise about what it is for someone to be obligated to be partial to another. Such is the aim of the remainder of this section.

1.2 *What Partiality Is*

Partiality is often contrasted with impartiality, which involves bracketing or overlooking one's personal interests in and/or attachments to others. When someone ignores one's interests/attachments, that person does not favor one person or group in a special way simply because the person or group has a special relationship to oneself. For example, if I favor Joy in certain ways precisely because she is my mother, I am partial toward Joy. To be partial, one needs to treat one entity (e.g., my mother), or one kind of entity (e.g., my family members), with favor precisely because the entity is related to myself in a certain way.⁷ This favoring manifests

⁷ I am hereby assuming what is called the "Relationships View" in the literature. (If one wishes to adapt Obligations to Partiality to other views, one can add 'or status' after 'relationship' in the principle.) The Relationships View is opposed to the Individuals View, according to which we have obligations of partiality to individuals because they have a particular quality or status. It is also opposed to the view that we have obligations of partiality to those who have the status of being bound up in our ground projects—the "Projects View." Instead, I am here focusing on whether our employer's relationship to us gives us an obligation to be partial to our employer, thus tabling the Individuals View and Projects View.

Why am I tabling these other views? It is because I have obligations to my parents and children regardless of what quality or status they have, and regardless of whether being a father, son, etc. is bound up with my ground projects. Further, the arguments for these views often involve appealing to the reasoning I use when I justify my partiality toward someone, but the reasoning I use is not necessarily related to what makes me obligated. (Similarly, Utilitarianism might explain why I have an obligation to someone even if I could not use Utilitarianism in my reasoning due to its complexity or the fact that it is self-effacing.) Finally, proponents of the Individuals View and Projects View often seek to show why partiality is justified, not that one is obligated to be partial, so many of the arguments for those views do not apply to the issue addressed in this chapter.

itself in the behaviors described above, and an obligation to favor in that way strengthens our obligations in ways also described above.

Of course, employees sign an explicit agreement with their employers and provide their employers with benefits, e.g., labor. Employees thus seem to already have provided their employer with a benefit. What, then do employees owe their employers partiality for? Why would employees owe anything, in addition to the agreed-upon labor, to their employer? Let us call this question the “Main Employee Partiality Question.”

Main Employee Partiality Question: Why would employees owe anything, in addition to the agreed-upon labor, to their employer?

In what follows, I give reasons to think that the fact that our employer is *our* employer gives us reasons that we are obligated to favor our employer (over reasons provided by the mere facts that my employer is an employer, can provide services to me, etc.) That is, we owe our employer partiality in addition to our agreed-upon labor.

If we owe our employer anything, our obligation to our employer is defeasible; the obligation can be overridden by further considerations. For example, were my mother to become very abusive, I would thereby not be obligated to be partial toward her, since her abuse would override obligations I would have had to be partial toward her on account of her being my mother. Further, defeasible obligations can be overridden by obligations I have toward others. If I have a defeasible obligation to use my time to care for my mother but I have a stronger obligation to use that time to care for my son, then my obligation to my son can override my obligation to care for my mother at that time. Similarly, if our employer is exploitative or if our

Proponents of the Individuals View include Blum 1980, Friedman 1993, Keller 2013, Jollimore 2011, and Velleman 1999. Proponents of the Projects View include Rorty 1997, Williams 1981, and Wolf 1992, and proponents of the Relationships View include Jeske 2008, Raz 1989, and Scheffler 2002.

obligations to our employer are overridden by our obligations to our family or friends, the obligation we have to our employer is overridden.

The method in this article will be to draw from work on paradigmatic examples of relationships in which one party is obligated to be partial to another. In the next three sections, I provide reasons why one party is obligated to be partial toward the other and then attempt to discover whether these reasons apply to employee/employer relationships.

The primary paradigmatic relationship I will use is the relationship between children and their parents when the children are adults. This is because the parent/child relationship is (in typical cases) a paradigmatic relationship of partiality in which one party, the parents, has provided for another party, the children, and when children are adults they have the ability to abandon their relationship with their parents and choose not to be partial to their parents. Similarly, in a typical employer/employee relationship, the employee is provided for by the employer, and the employee has the ability to choose to leave the employment relationship for another employer and not be partial toward their former employer. Although the aforementioned similarities between the parent/child and employer/employee relationship will not always be relevant to the partiality required of one party, the similarities make the parent/child relationship apt for comparison.⁸

In what follows, I describe three primary views of reasons that adult children are obligated to be partial toward their parents, and I apply these reasons to the employer/employee

⁸ One way of objecting to the project in this chapter is to describe morally relevant dissimilarities between the parent/child and employer/employee relationship. I maintain that such dissimilarities can lead to a slight reworking of the parent/child analogue or are morally irrelevant. For example, to the objection that employers have asymmetrical power over their employees, one might adjust the analogue so that we seek reasons that middle-school children have obligations of partiality to their parents, since there is an asymmetry of power between parents and middle-school children. To the objection that employers are not vulnerable in the way parents are, such an objection seems morally irrelevant, since the reasons described below do not rely on the owed party being vulnerable. (Thank you to Grant Rozeboom for raising these points.)

relationship to answer the Employee Partiality Question. The three views are the Debt of Gratitude View (Section 2), Historical Interaction View (Section 3), and Friendship View (Section 4).

2. The Debt of Gratitude View

According to the Debt of Gratitude View, an adult child has a defeasible obligation to be partial to their parent (who has provided for them) as a way of reciprocating for the parent's provision to the child. The fact that the parent has provided for the child in a certain kind of way as a parent gives the child a reason that they are obligated to favor their parent over those who are not the child's parents.⁹ It is worth noting that what is owed to the provider need not be commensurable with what is provided. A parent who gives a child violin lessons for the child's benefit is not owed music lessons or the monetary equivalent thereof but might instead be owed gratitude, acknowledgment, or support of some other kind. In other words, the provider is owed partiality of some sort, though the kind or manifestation of partiality need not be specifiable in terms of ledgered repayment.

How can the Debt of Gratitude View be used to answer the Employer Partiality Question? Although some defenders of the Debt of Gratitude View maintain that adult children owe their parents for fulfilling their parental duties toward their children,¹⁰ others hold that nothing is owed to those who merely do their duty.¹¹ In the employer/employee relationship,

⁹ Of course, this reason can be outweighed by even stronger requiring reasons for the adult child to be partial to others (e.g., the adult child's children) over other individuals (e.g., the adult child's parents).

¹⁰ Wicclair claims that if any "goods or services are reasonably believed to be essential to the health, well-being, and proper development of children," those children owe their parents for having provided those goods and services "whether or not adult children acknowledge their value" (167). Hoff Sommers (1986) also defends the Debt of Gratitude view, asserting that Aristotle and Aquinas also held to the view, according to which children owe parents as "making a return for benefits received" and "Both Aristotle and Aquinas count life itself as the first and most important gift a child is given" (441).

¹¹ See Callahan 1987, p. 89.

much of the employer's duty is involved in reciprocating in ways agreed upon in the employment contract: the employer repays the employee for the employee's labor as agreed upon in the employment contract and, in many cases, provides the means for the employee to do that work (which is also likely accounted for in the employee's compensation). It hardly seems that an employee owes the employer for the employer's reciprocation.

There are, however, three conditions under which an employee would owe an employer partiality on the Debt of Gratitude View. First, employees can owe their employers for choosing them for employment in the first place. The offering of an employment contract to a particular individual is not the employer's obligation, and the employee's fulfillment of the employment contract does not repay any debt owed to the employer for the offering of the employment contract. Mark Wicclair (1990) similarly argues that children owe their parents for assuming the role of a parent to the child in the first place. One might object: the parents did not choose the particular child, so the particular child does not owe their parents for choosing them in particular. (Callahan 1987, 88) Such an objection, however, does not apply in the case of an employer/employee relationship, in which the employer does choose the particular employee with whom to enter into an employment relationship.

Second, if an employer provides for the employee in ways that benefit the employee but are neither specified in nor required to fulfill the employment agreement, those extra benefits might generate an obligation to be partial toward the employer.¹² For example, an employer might provide a workplace that is more luxurious or comfortable than is required for their employees. They might provide food, occasions to enjoy time with coworkers (e.g., company picnics), extra bonuses, or extra paid time off. In some cases, businesses can let employees have a

¹² Blustein (1982) analogously holds that this is a reason adult children have for owing their parents.

say in who their coworkers are in order to build a community at work, and in other cases they can overlook the failures of some of their employees. In these cases, employers are going “beyond their duty,” and employees are (defeasibly) obligated to be partial to their employer to the extent that the employer provides for employees in ways that are not merely repaying employees for their work.

Third, in some cases, employers can include these “beyond their duty” perks in the employment contract in order to make what would be beyond their duty part of their duty, as an assurance to their new hire that these extra perks will be provided. By analogy, a parent could promise their child that they will make a substantial down payment on the child’s first house, and the fulfillment of this promise might merit gratitude on the part of the child even though the fulfillment is, after the promise was made, a mere fulfillment of the parent’s duty. Similarly, employees might be obligated to be partial to their employers to the extent to which employers fulfill conditions of the employment contract that are not mere compensation for the employee’s work and which are intended to benefit the employee. As an objection, one might think that such “beyond their duty” conditions in a contract are intended to benefit the employer, since they are intended to entice the employee to seek employment with the particular employer rather than another. In reply, the “beyond their duty” conditions are nevertheless not required by any of the employer’s prior duties, and the employer’s communication of the message “I want you to work with me so much that I am willing to do these extra things for you” seems to merit gratitude from the recipient of such an offer were the recipient to accept the offer.

One objection to the idea that an employer’s going beyond their duty for their employees generates reasons for their employees to be partial is that an employer’s favors or supererogatory actions are not requested by their employees, and when favors are unrequested, no return is

owed.¹³ Such favors, according to the objection, are merely bids for friendship, and the bid can be ignored. However, although a few favors might be permissibly ignored, many favors (or a small number of large favors) seem to require a favorable response on the part of the recipient. Wicclair (1990) tells a story of a daughter, Mindy, whose parents put her in violin lessons, and she ends up enjoying them. Never requesting to continue them, her parents continue the lessons, leading to her desire to pursue a career as a concert violinist. In this case, “it would be disingenuous if she were to claim that she owes her parents nothing because she did not ask for those lessons” (167). Similarly, if someone offers their neighbor a large sum of money, the neighbor might refuse solely on the basis that if they were to accept it, they would have to do act partially toward the offeror, and the neighbor might not want to incur such an obligation. Further, one might think there to be something amiss in a situation in which someone performs many small favors for their neighbor, and their neighbor, with full knowledge of these favors and the option to return many of the favors, opts not to.

If these reasons hold, then, employees owe some form of partiality to employers who choose them in particular and who perform favors beyond the contractual agreement. In some cases, employees owe partiality to employers even for fulfilling their contractual agreement if the contract contains conditions that (antecedent to their inclusion) are beyond the employer’s duties. It is not, and cannot be, specified exactly what shape the partiality would be that employees would owe employers in the above conditions, since the kind or manifestation of partiality need not be specifiable in terms of ledgered repayment; however, it also cannot be specified what one neighbor would owe someone who performs many small favors. In some cases, the repayment can be provided over time, varying with the needs of the provider. A mere expression of

¹³ See Slote 1979, p. 320 for this objection.

gratitude might suffice initially, but additional help is owed later when the provider needs it.¹⁴ Such repayment likely takes wisdom and knowledge of the provider's needs.

One important qualification to the view above is that one does not owe someone for favors that are motivated solely by self-interest. Instead, the favors need to be motivated at least in part by love or care for the recipient.¹⁵ If someone offers their neighbor money solely in order to exact a favor later, or if parents raise children in ways only to make themselves look like successful parents to others, such favors do not generate obligations of partiality on the part of the recipients. The words "solely" and "at least in part" above are important; a recipient of a neighbor's favors can be obligated to return the favor even if the offeror is motivated in part by their desire to enter into a relationship with the recipient. Similarly, children might owe parents gratitude even if the parents are motivated in part by their own enjoyment of providing such favors. After all, children might *want* their parents to be motivated in part by their own enjoyment of raising their children. By extension to the employer/employee relationship, in order for employees to have an obligation to be partial toward their employers, employers need to provide favors for employees out of care for employees, and this motivation should be communicated to employees. Employers might also find that their favors generate a return on investment, and employees might want their employers to benefit from the favors. Nevertheless, an others-oriented motivation is required for employees to owe gratitude for favors offered to them.

¹⁴ Feinberg (1966) states such: "My benefactor once freely offered me his services when I needed them. There was, on that occasion, nothing for me to do in return but express my deepest gratitude to him...But now circumstances have arisen in which he needs help, and I am in a position to help him. Surely, I owe him my services now, and he would be entitled to resent my failure to come through."

¹⁵ See, e.g., Wicclair 1990, p. 165, and Berger 1975, n. 11.

It is valuable for employers to act beyond their duties to provide favors for employees and for employees to, in return, have an obligation to be partial toward their employers. Debts of gratitude in the workplace are valuable in the same way it is valuable for one to have an obligation to keep one's promises. Promise-making creates assurances that make it possible to establish and sustain valuable relationships, and keeping one's promises reinforces the trust that is required for promising to create those assurances.¹⁶ Similarly, an employer's provision of non-obligatory favors to an employee makes it possible for employees to thrive in the workplace, and an employee's obligation to reciprocal partiality reinforces employers' efforts to create a workplace in which employees can thrive. The Debt of Gratitude View, then, describes how value can be added to create a thriving workplace as employers and employees act in reciprocal ways that are, in many cases, unspecified by the employment contract.

3. The Historical Interaction View

Another reason that one is obligated to be partial toward another is provided by the Historical Interaction View. According to this view, one has a reason to owe partiality to another entity when one has a history of interaction with that entity toward an aim that one has reason to respond positively to independently of the interaction.¹⁷ For example, adult children have a requiring reason to be partial to their parents, with whom they have had a history of interaction toward the parents' aim of the helping the child. Since one has a reason to respond positively toward the help that the parents have provided, one has a requiring reason to be partial to their

¹⁶See Scheffler 2003, ch. 3.

¹⁷ This is an instance of a more general principle that Kolodny calls "Resonance of Personal Aims": "one has reason to respond to a history of pursuing some aim, and one's pursuit of it, that is similar to the responses that one has reason to give that aim apart from such a history, but that reflects the distinctive importance of a personal history" Kolodny (2010b, 46); (2010a, 180). The Historical Interaction View also seems to be endorsed by Hurka (1997).

parents.¹⁸ The same is true of friends who, *inter alia*, aid each other. Niko Kolodny, who advances the Historical Interaction View, observes that such historical interactions can occur even in cases in which two parties have entered into repeated contractual agreements over time with the following thought experiment:

Imagine a lone traveler, of a bygone age, making his way west. Along the way, he helps and is helped by the people dwelling in the places he passes through, creating and incurring various debts. Contrast him with a different traveler who helps and is helped in the same ways, but by one companion throughout. The companioned traveler has responses that are not simply the sum of the responses for which the companionless traveler has reason, but just refocused, as it were, on a single person. The companionless traveler has accumulated debts that he might repay and then move on. But things are not like that for the companioned traveler. He has reason for a concern for his friend's interests that is open-ended: that keeps no ledger and that asks only that like concern be reciprocated. Further, he has reason not to move on, but instead to sustain his friendship going forward. Their history together roots an expansive loyalty, in a way in which no string of encounters with a changing cast could. Such is the distinctive importance that only a shared history with another person can have. (Kolodny 2010b, 50-51; 2010a, 183)

So, even if two parties have only entered into contractual agreements, the fact that it was the same individuals who entered into those agreements generates a reason to have a positive response to the other—the other is trustworthy and cooperative; they have rendered us aid for

¹⁸ Apart from Kolodny's application of the view to the parent/child relationship, Callahan seems to endorse a version of this view with respect to the parent/child relationship: "Whether we like it or not, we are in some sense always one with our parents both because of the unique circumstances by which we came to know them and because of the long period of nurture when we were utterly dependent upon them" (p. 91).

which we are grateful (even if we have rendered them aid in return); and as a result we have a reason for a kind of solidarity with them and loyalty to them as they have to us.

The Historical Interaction View can be applied to the employer/employee relationship. Even if an employer has merely reciprocated with a paycheck for an employee's work, as long as the employee has a positive view of receiving a paycheck for one's work and the employer has consistently rendered payment to the employee, there is reason for the employee to trust their employer, see their employer as cooperative, and be grateful for their paycheck. As it was with the companioned traveler in Kolodny's thought experiment, employees have reason for a kind of solidarity with their employer and loyalty to them as their employer has been to them.¹⁹ Kolodny adds that when one has a history of engagement with an institution (e.g. a business), the solidarity is "focused on the survival and functioning of the institution...one owes it to the others [in one's institution] to close ranks in defense of the institution, but not necessarily to see to it that their lives go well in other ways." (Kolodny 2010a, 184; 2010b, 52)

Of course, such a view does not imply that it would be wrong for an employee to resign in order to work for a different employer for a good personal reason (e.g., higher salary, better working conditions, a more rewarding career, a benefit to the employee's family). Similarly, it would not be wrong for the companioned traveler to begin dealing with a different traveler for good reasons (e.g., the new companion is happy to provide favors for less repayment, makes dealing much easier, offers favors that make the traveler's life better than the old companion's offers, provides more benefits for the traveler's family.)

One important qualification to the view above is that one is obligated to be partial to one's employer to the extent to which (1) a good cause is accomplished by the employer with the

¹⁹ For the analysis in terms of trust, cooperation, gratitude, solidarity, and loyalty, see Kolodny 2010b, pp. 183-4.

employee's assistance and (2) the employee is intimately involved with one's employer for the accomplishment of the good cause (Hurka 1997). Concerning (1), members of the Nazi SS do not, on the Historical Interaction View, have a reason to be loyal toward one another, because one is not entitled to feel positively toward the Nazi SS's actions, which were not for a good cause. When the Historical Interaction View is applied to determine whether citizens of the same state have a reason to be partial toward one another, Kolodny writes, "[the] responses that co-citizenship calls for will depend on an independent appraisal of the value or disvalue, justice or injustice, of the state in question—and, indeed, of states in general" (Kolodny 2010a, 192). Concerning (2), it is reasonable to think that an employee who works with their company to develop an assistance program for underprivileged children and who helps the company provide extra benefits to employees should feel more positively toward the corporation's initiatives—and thus feel more solidarity with the company—than does an entry-level employee without direct involvement in the initiatives.

The reason for the qualification above, that the employee needs to be acting for a good cause with the employer to have a reason for partiality toward the employer, follows from the value of being partial toward another as a result of historical interaction with them. Being partial toward those with whom we have interacted in the past is a way of honoring²⁰ or respecting²¹ the good done by that historical interaction. As it would be wrong to honor or respect wrong done, one is not obligated to be partial toward those with whom one has only participated in wrongdoing. By extension to the employer/employee relationship, in order for employees to have an obligation to be partial toward their employers, employers need to ensure that they are

²⁰ This reason for being partial on the basis of historical interaction is given by Hurka (1997) and Kolodny (2010b, 190).

²¹ Callahan (1987) uses the language of "respect" in what he calls a "veteranship" reason for being partial toward one's aging parents, that children show "respect for the concrete contributions of the old in years past" (111).

acting for a good cause, one toward which employees appropriately feel positively. In this way, employees can appropriately honor and respect the good cause that they are participating in accomplishing with their employer by being partial toward their employer.

4. The Friendship View

Another reason that one is obligated to be partial toward another is provided by the Friendship View. According to the view, one has a reason to owe partiality to another entity when they are friends. In relationships of friendship, if one party performs a favor for the other, no return obligation is owed. Instead, the favor comprises a bid for further friendship. Jane English (1991) gives an example of someone who mows their neighbor's lawn. The person performing the favor might not expect their neighbor to reciprocate by mowing their lawn or rendering payment for the service (in fact, a repayment might be refused) but instead expects friendship—perhaps a nice chat or an offer to join them for dinner at some future date (148).

Although it might seem inapt to describe the relationship between an employer and an employee as a “friendship,” there are reasons to think the term applies. First, there can be contractual arrangements between friends, as when one friend sells a car on a payment plan to another or when one individual works for their friend. Although friends in these cases are bound to their contractual agreements, it is not the agreement that grounds their friendship; rather, it is what English calls “mutuality,” a mutual working toward each other's good. Second, one party can become friends with another without having initiated the friendship and without awareness that a friendship is forming. Friendship is often something that happens between two parties even if the parties had not reflected on their relationship, as might be the case in Kolodny's companioned traveler thought experiment above. Given these observations, there might be reason to think an employee can have a friendship (or something very close to a friendship) with

one's employer even if (1) there is an ongoing contractual agreement between the employer and the employee, (2) the employee never initiated a friendship with their employer, and (3) the employee is unaware of any friendship they have with their employer.

The Friendship View bears many similarities to the Debt of Gratitude View. Similar to the Debt of Gratitude View, friends repay each other's favors without keeping a ledger.

Although, according to the Friendship View, not all favors are owed reciprocation, if one party to a relationship performs enough unrequited favors for the other, the relationship ceases to be a friendship and becomes closer to servility. One proposed difference is stated as follows: equal sacrifices cancel a debt of gratitude but do not cancel the duties of friendship; thus, the Debt of Gratitude View cannot explain the obligations that remain between friends after each has provided (roughly) equal favors for one another (English 1991, 151). However, as can be seen in Kolodny's companioned traveler thought experiment, a debt of gratitude is owed not only for individual favors but for the continued offering of favors and ongoing reciprocation. This gratitude can be returned in part by trust, loyalty, and even friendship. In fact, Kolodny describes the relationship between the companioned travelers as "friendship" (2010a, 183).²²

A further similarity is that the qualification to the Friendship View is similar to the qualification made to the Debt of Gratitude View: in order for one party to communicate that a favor is a bid for friendship, one needs to communicate that the favor is motivated at least in part out of love or care for the other person rather than self-interest or the repayment of a debt.²³ Of course, sometimes friends do seek to repay a debt, and doing so does not nullify the friendship; in

²² Another proposed difference between the Debt of Gratitude View and the Friendship View is that when a friendship is ended, no debts of friendship are owed, but when a relationship is severed, debts of gratitude are still owed (English 1991, 151). It is not clear to me, however, that this is the case. By ending the relationship, one party seems thereby to be cancelling the favors or debts of gratitude owed therein, even if there is no friendship involved.

²³ See English 1991, 149.

fact, it is sometimes appropriate for friends to repay debts. Further, friendship can happen gradually and organically, without any clear bids for friendship.²⁴ However, if an employer wishes to communicate a bid of friendship to their employees, the employer must in some way communicate that the motivation of the favor is at least in part to care for or benefit their employee.

The Friendship View also bears many similarities to the Historical Interaction View. Friendship is developed through historical interactions directed at a common cause, and as the parties work with and for each other in service to the common cause, trust, solidarity, and loyalty build in a way that constitutes friendship. Kolodny (a proponent of the Historical Interaction View) describes friendship as follows: “Friendship is a history of, *inter alia*, encounters of aid. And friendship calls for, *inter alia*, feelings and actions that might naturally be seen as resonant with, *inter alia*, the gratitude that discrete encounters of aid call for” (2010a, 182). This way of describing the formation of friendship makes it seem as if all three views convalesce into a picture of how historical interactions of working together both build debts of gratitude between the parties and create genuine, even if unreflective, friendship among the parties.

5. Conclusion

In employment relationships, there are three primary reasons to think we have obligations of partiality toward our employer, though these reasons are not always clearly distinct. The first reason is that employees owe employers a debt of gratitude for (1) having hired

²⁴ Kolodny describes this incremental approach in his 2003, pp. 169-170. Scheffler describes the phenomenon moral generally: “[G]roups that have been seen as generating associative duties can sometimes be joined voluntarily, but the more typical pattern is for members to be socialized into the group gradually in the course of their development, so that they come to see themselves as part of the group without any consciousness of ever having made a decision to join it, and without any sense that there was ever a time in their lives when they were not part of it. So it is, often, with membership in a community or in a national or religious group” (2003, Ch. 3).

the particular employee in the first place, (2) going beyond their duty to provide for the employee in ways not specified in the employment contract, and/or (3) including in the employment contract conditions that would be beyond the employer's duties were they not to be included in the contract. Even in cases in which the employer does not provide for the employee beyond the employment contract (and does not include favors "beyond their duty" in the employment contract), if the employer and the employee have interacted for a good cause, this historical interaction can build trust, cooperation, and solidarity that provides reasons for the employee to act partially toward their employer. Further, as an employee and an employer interact for a good cause and the employer provides for the employee in a way that is motivated by care for the employee, a friendship can form between the employee and the employer.

Employers who are interested in generating obligations of partiality from their employees can learn from the above reasons for employees to owe partiality to employers. In order for the reasons to apply, employers need to ensure the following conditions are met:

1. **Obligation Fulfillment:** Employers should ensure they are consistently faithful to their employees, fulfilling their obligations thereto, as this is a precondition of all three views and is explicitly a part of the Historical Interaction View. If the companion to Kolodny's traveler did not return favors, the traveler would thereby not have a reason to be partial to the companion.
2. **Beyond Obligations:** Employers should seek to provide additional favors to their employees for which employees will be grateful, thus generating debts of gratitude among employees.
3. **Motivation Matters:** Employers should (truthfully) communicate that they are acting out of care for employees, as opposed to mere self-interest, a qualification for both the Debt of Gratitude View and Friendship View.

4. **The Cause Matters:** Employers need to ensure they are acting for a good cause (even if that good cause is correcting their past errors). According to the Historical Interaction View, employees are not obligated to be partial to employers who act for wrongful causes. Further, employers should involve employees more intimately in these good causes if they wish to generate a more extensive obligation to partiality in their employees.

Thus, if employers want to provide employees with reasons to be loyal toward their employer, to trust their employer, and to act in solidarity with their employer, closing ranks to defend and perpetuate the employer even in ways not specified in the employment contract, employers should not only meet their obligations to their employees but go beyond these obligations, motivated out of care for their employees for a good cause.

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