AGAINST PATERNALISM: A DEVELOPMENTAL VIEW

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Abstract

Paternalism is generally construed to entail two claims about persons toward whom it is directed: (1) that their liberty is impeded, and (2) that their good or interests are promoted or intended. Two recent arguments on the subject are based on the writings of John Stuart Mill: one, by Gerald Dworkin, maintains that paternalism is sometimes justified; the other, by Tom Beauchamp, claims that paternalism is never justified. My critique of both positions is based on a concept of human life as developmental. In that context I argue that Mill's views themselves entail paternalism, Dworkin's position collapses into Beauchamp's, and Beauchamp neglects the crucial role of liberty in his critique of Mill. My conclusion suggests that a parental model be substituted for that of the pater, so that the individual's capacity for freedom be fully respected.
I

Consider the following recent definitions of paternalism:

(a) "interference with a person's liberty for his own good,"
(b) "protection of individuals from harming themselves in situations where their decisions are impaired,"
(c) "coercion of people in their own interest."

Each of these definitions entails two claims about persons towards whom paternalism is directed: first, that their liberty (L) is impeded; second, that their good or interests (I) are promoted or intended. L and I are represented as in opposition, such that the following range of positions regarding justifications for paternalism may be described.

POSITION A. Paternalism is always justified, or I > L. We may call this a reactionary view; exemplars are Hobbes, the Grand Inquisitor and Skinner.

POSITION B. Paternalism is never justified, or L > I. We may call this a radical view; exemplars are Sartre, Mill and Beauchamp.

\[1\] (a) is from Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism," The Monist 56 (1972), 67. (b) is from C. L. Ten, "Paternalism and Morality," Ratio 13 (1971), 63. (c) is from Francis Schrag, "The Child In the Moral Order," Philosophy 52 (1977), 169.

\[2\] For Thomas Hobbes (cf. Leviathan) paternalism is justified by the power motif; for the Grand Inquisitor (cf. Ivan's parable in Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov) paternalism is a form of caring for others; for B. F. Skinner (cf. Beyond Freedom and Dignity) paternalism is always justified because freedom does not exist.

\[3\] For Jean-Paul Sartre (cf. Being and Nothingness) there is no I that has priority over L because liberty is the only absolute human value. I deal with the positions of Mill and Beauchamp in subsequent sections.
POSITION C. Paternalism is sometimes justified, (L>l) or (L<l). This may be:
(1) a conservative view, if "sometimes" means "usually" or "often"; exemplars would then be
Stephen, Devlin and Mitchell.4 Or
(2) a liberal view, if "sometimes" means "rarely" or "occasionally"; exemplars would
then be Hart, Rawls, Dworkin, Ten, Hodson,
Carter, Schrag, Feinberg, Murphy, Gert/Culver,
Bok.5

In this paper I do not attempt to elaborate on all of
the above examples. If any of these classifications do not
fit, the position remains available to other exemplars.
Neither do I present arguments for or against Position A,
since this seems clearly the least supportable position,
and Positions B and C themselves contain implicit arguments
against that view. In addressing the latter positions I
focus on two of their strongest recent advocates, viz.,
Gerald Dworkin (Position C) and Tom Beauchamp (Position B),
both of whom have drawn from the writings of John Stuart
Mill to defend their positions. As it turns out, however,
Mill's views themselves entail paternalism, Dworkin's is
not really permissive of paternalism, and Beauchamp's fails
to account for the essential relation between liberty and

4The conservative view typically entails endorsement of
legal paternalism; cf. James Fitzjames Stephen, Liberty,
Equality, Fraternity; Patrick Devlin, The Enforcement of
Morals; Basil Mitchel, Law, Morality and Religion in a
Secular Society.

5Although all of these writers claim that paternalism is
permissible under certain conditions, the conditions specified
are usually such that the ordinary meaning of paternalism
(as entailing restriction of liberty) is lost. Cf. Dworkin,
Ten and Schrag as indicated in fn. 1; H. L. A. Hart, Law,
Liberty and Morality; John Rawls, A Theory of Justice;
John D. Hodson, "The principle of Paternalism," American
Philosophical Quarterly 14 (1977); Rosemary Carter, "Justifying
Paternalism," Canadian Journal of Philosophy 7 (1977); Joel
Feinberg, "Legal Paternalism," Canadian Journal of Philosophy
1 (1971); Jeffrie Murphy, "Incompetence and Paternalism,
Archiv für Rechts und Sozialphilosophie 60 (1974); Bernard
Gert and Charles Culver, "Paternalistic Behavior," Philosophy
and Public Affairs (1976); Sisella Bok, "Lying to Children:
protection from harm. In light of the inadequacies of these views, my conclusion suggests an alternative through which each individual's capacity for freedom would be unimpeded except as necessary to prevent harm to others. Since this meaning does not entail opposition between L and I, it is not paternalistic. Since it invokes the model of parenting as involving both nurturing (maternal) and protective (paternal) roles, I call it parentalism. In another essay I develop at length the meaning of parentalism, proposing this position as paradigmatic for determining the justifiability of interventions into people's lives.6

II

Dworkin begins his discussion of paternalism by quoting Mill's classic denial of its justifiability:

That the only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise, or even right.7

After remarking that so absolute a condemnation is atypical in Mill, Dworkin examines the available supporting arguments. First and most obvious is the utilitarian principle of maximizing the good. In accordance with that principle Mill asserts that:

the strongest of all the arguments against the interference of the public with purely personal conduct is that when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly and in the wrong place.8

6"An Alternative to Paternalism," presented to the Medical Studies Forum, Indiana University at Indianapolis, Nov. 1979. In this paper I illustrate the concept of parentalism through a critique of Paul Ramsey and Richard McCormick.


8Mill, 122.
In other words, since each individual is probably the best judge of his or her own good, paternalism constitutes not only an infringement of liberty but an impediment to achievement of the good. The problem with this utilitarian argument, Dworkin claims, is that there are clear instances where the greater good demands paternalism—for example, to prevent someone from selling himself into slavery, from taking heroin, or from driving a car without wearing a seat belt. Thus the utilitarian argument is manifestly inadequate.

Searching Mill's writings for another argument against paternalism, Dworkin finds one based on his conception of the person as an autonomous agent. For Mill, as Dworkin interprets him, "to be able to choose is a good that is independent of the wisdom of what is chosen." Even in cases where a greater good is promoted paternalism is not justified because deprivation of liberty is always wrong. In labeling this argument "non-contingent," Dworkin apparently imputes deontological status to Mill's position. At this point, however, their views diverge, because for Mill the non-contingent argument constitutes the warrant for his absolute opposition to paternalism, while for Dworkin it suggests the 'narrow' principle by which paternalism may at times be justified, viz., "to preserve a wider range of freedom for the individual in question."

If we examine Dworkin's applications of the principle, his divergence with Mill seems more semantic than substantive. For example, Dworkin advocates adoption of "social insurance policies" through which proposed paternalistic measures may be judged "in terms of what fully rational individuals would accept as forms of protection." Since children are not "fully rational individuals," Dworkin fully supports "parental paternalism," agreeing with Mill's categorical distinction between adults and children. He also concurs with Mill on the permissibility of suicide (where it is ascertained that the act is free and rational, and will not harm others), and apparently endorses Mill's strong stand against voluntary slavery. In brief, what Mill continues to maintain on the basis of his non-contingent argument, Dworkin maintains on the basis of his criterion for justified paternalism.

9-13Dworkin (cf. fn. 1) 75, 74 ff., 76, 78, 76.
Even if we restrict ourselves to Dworkin's terminology, the label "paternalism" seems misapplied to cases where the liberty criterion is used. In such cases there simply is no opposition between liberty and the good or interests of the individual in question because \( L = I \) or \( I \rightarrow L \). But Dworkin's own definition of paternalism ("interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced") clearly suggests that \( L \neq I \) or that \( -(I \rightarrow L) \). Thus Dworkin's use of the term "paternalism" is equivocal: the paternalism defined is not the paternalism defended. In the first case his usage coincides with the ordinary meaning of the term; in the second, since the purpose of interference is maximization of liberty, Dworkin's position is anti-paternalistic.

Although Mill and Dworkin concur on the permissibility of suicide, I think an opposing view is defensible on their own grounds. Taking Dworkin's principle of "preserving a wider range of freedom" as consistent with Mill's own views in On Liberty and elsewhere, might we not construe prevention of suicide as the ultimate expression of the obligation to abide by that principle? Unless we introduce a religious dimension, such as faith in an afterlife where perfect freedom is achieved (a plausible but unarticulated view for Mill), permitting death surely fails to preserve freedom for the one who dies. For Mill, the permissibility of suicide may stem from a rather atomistic or empiricist notion of freedom--through which it is identified with separate acts of choice. That this interpretation coincides with Dworkin's concept of freedom's "wider range" seems unlikely. Hence I'm left puzzled about how to reconcile Dworkin's principle or Mill's non-contingent argument with the permissibility of suicide.

One final point of apparent disagreement between Dworkin and Mill, and of genuine disagreement between them and me. Quoting H. L. A. Hart, Dworkin criticizes the standard on which Mill bases his utilitarian argument against paternalism:

\[ \text{Dworkin (cf. fn. 1) 65.} \]
Mill, in fact, endows him [i.e., a "normal human being"] with too much of the psychology of a middle-aged man whose desires are relatively fixed, not liable to be artificially stimulated by external influences, who knows what he wants and what gives him satisfaction or happiness, and who pursues these things when he can.\textsuperscript{15}

Dworkin obviously wants to avoid the inadequate view of human nature to which Hart refers, and also the "fantastic" lengths to which that view gives rise.\textsuperscript{16} Consider, however, Dworkin's call for "social insurance policies" based on "what fully rational individuals would accept for their protection." "Fully rational individuals" seem not so different from Mill's "normal human beings," especially in light of Mill's insistence that his doctrine of liberty is not applicable to "backward" peoples or "barbarians":

Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion.\textsuperscript{17}

Neither Mill nor Dworkin regards coercive interference in such cases as unjustified, either because "liberty has no application" (Mill) or because liberty will thereby be increased (Dworkin). As the passage from Hart suggests, this view appears overly restrictive or elitist--whether justifiably or not. In a later section I will address this point in greater detail.

Let me now summarize Position C as represented by Dworkin in the following manner: Paternalism, or the infringement of an individual's liberty for that individual's own good, is justified only in cases where such infringement preserves a wider range of freedom for the individual in question. In other words, the good promoted is the good of liberty. Thus there no longer is any opposition between


\textsuperscript{16}Cf. Hart 32, and Dworkin 72.

\textsuperscript{17}Mill, 14, 15.
L and I, and the ordinary meaning of paternalism is radically altered. What Dworkin defends, then, is not really Position C but Position B, and it is to this position that we will now address ourselves.

III

Tom Beauchamp approaches Mill's doctrine from a perspective quite different from that of Dworkin. Where Dworkin focuses on the notion of liberty, Beauchamp is concerned only with Mill's harm principle as sufficient to sustain his absolute prohibition of paternalism. However, in defending Mill, Beauchamp also wants to accommodate the possibility that in certain cases one may justifiably consent to another's "harm" (for example, by permitting suicide). He accordingly introduces a distinction between harm and injury (wrongful harm); what makes harm "wrongful" for Beauchamp is the absence of consent, presumed or otherwise. Mill's stand on the justifiability of "coercive interventions" is then represented as requiring either of the following conditions:

(I) There exist supportable grounds for believing that an individual or group or institution serving the public interest has been or will be injured (wrongfully harmed) by the actions or negligence of others.

(II) There exist supportable grounds for believing that an individual or group of individuals has been or will be physically or mentally harmed by some cause or condition which is to that party not known or not within its control or both.

On examination, the above conditions suggest that Beauchamp's argument is not really so separate or separable from the consideration of individual liberty (cf. Dworkin's non-contingent argument), since each implies the necessity of informed consent. The first condition refers to grounds for believing that the individual has been or will be injured without informed consent; the second refers to grounds for believing that the individual has been or will be harmed without informed consent. In other words, some abridgment of liberty is entailed by either condition.

18 Tom Beauchamp, "Paternalism and Biobehavioral Control," The Monist 60 (1977), 70.

19 Beauchamp, 71.
Although Beauchamp does not explicitly deal with the relation between liberty and harm in Mill, this conceptual relation is crucial to a recognition of Mill's full argument. But these concepts in turn depend upon Mill's concept of happiness, for it is the telos of happiness which constitutes moral justification for individual and social efforts and interventions, and it is denial of such happiness that constitutes harm. For Mill, the highest human happiness is rational, and such rationality necessarily entails liberty. In The Subjection of Women he decries the harm done to women through their legal subjugation, urging legal emancipation because it would result in "unspeakable gain in private happiness to the liberated half of the species."20 In On Liberty he argues that no social progress or advancement of human happiness can occur unless individual liberty is insured:

\[
\text{the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centres of improvement as there are individuals.}^{21}
\]

Improvement for Mill means the development not only of the capacity for rational happiness, but also actual increase in happiness, both qualitatively and quantitatively. While happiness and harm are non-moral values, Mill views them as morally justificatory ends of human conduct (happiness is an end to be achieved, harm an end to be avoided). He thus affirms an essential link between non-moral and moral values. Liberty, as the ability to choose or reject these values, remains a necessary condition for any moral (or immoral) choice.

Given such a set of conceptual relations between happiness, harm and liberty, it is always morally wrong to inflict harm on another deliberately, unless one thus avoids a greater harm or loss of happiness. Accordingly, Mill's concept of "harm" already includes the wrongfulness connoted by injury, and he can quite consistently countenance voluntary suicide, without need for Beauchamp's distinction between harm and injury.


In opposing the paternalism allowed by Dworkin, Hart and others, Beauchamp argues that use of paternalistic justifications is (a) dangerous (in that these may be extended beyond appropriate bounds), and (b) unnecessary in those cases where coercive interventions are appropriate. In the latter cases, Mill's harm (non-injury) principle provides sufficient justification. Beauchamp correctly views Mill as offering no justification at all for paternalistic interventions; yet the cases justified by his harm principle nicely coincide with those that Dworkin calls justified paternalism. Hence, while Dworkin confesses to paternalism, Beauchamp himself cannot hold him guilty of the sin.

All this suggests of course that the views of Beauchamp and Dworkin are not so far apart, and that both are in overall agreement with Mill. While Dworkin emphasizes the liberty principle, and Beauchamp the harm principle--these are not separable arguments for Mill himself. Both have necessarily to do with the "happiness principle," about which I will have more to say subsequently. Thus far, although my aim has been to describe and assess different positions regarding paternalism, I have mainly succeeded in collapsing two positions into one, through Mill. I wish now to argue for Position B in a way that I think overcomes at least some of the difficulties that remain in the collapsed version of Mill/Dworkin/Beauchamp.

IV

Preliminarily, let me summarize the points at which I agree and disagree with Mill, Dworkin and Beauchamp.

| Agree | Mill | a) Absolute prohibition of paternalism | Disagree | 1) Categorical distinction between child/adult, and between barbarian and civilized people |
|       | b) Liberty is essential for human happiness | 2) Prohibition of voluntary slavery |
|       |       | 3) Liberty as productive of happiness | 1) Distinction between child/adult, and between those who are "fully rational" and those who are not |
| Agree | Dworkin | c) Meaning of paternalism | 1) Adequacy of harm principle as unrelated to liberty |
|       | Beauchamp | a) Absolute prohibition of paternalism | 22Cf. Beauchamp, 77-78. |
I will count the entries in the "Agree" column as having been adequately defended by their authors, and proceed to address our points of disagreement.

1) My main objection to Mill and Dworkin's views about children is that their position lacks a sense of the developmental reality of human life. Mill's categorization of children as beyond the pale of concern for liberty is inconsistent with his insistence on the role of liberty as essential to human happiness (unless of course he thinks that children cannot be happy). And Dworkin's argument for parental paternalism seems to contradict his own liberty principle:

> Given these deficiencies "they lack some of the emotional and cognitive capacities required in order to make fully rational decisions" and given the very real and permanent dangers that may befall the child it becomes not only permissible but even a duty of the parent to restrict the child's freedom in various ways.23

Only if "the very real and permanent dangers" are construed as a greater loss of freedom than the loss imposed by paternalistic interference is Dworkin's criterion for justified paternalism satisfied.

As suggested earlier, I have a similar problem with the Mill/Dworkin position towards "barbarians" or less than "fully rational individuals." Here I would claim that the developmental reality of human life entails diverse levels of diverse kinds of development, and that life as lived involves both progress and regress in these regards. It seems obvious that certain individuals from "backward" nations are intellectually, emotionally or physically more advanced than their counterparts from "civilized" nations. In fact Mill himself discovered as a youth that he was aesthetically underdeveloped despite a brilliant intellect.24 My point is that rationality is a common human trait, whose full expression is rare if not impossible in all cultures and ages, and that even

23Dworkin, 76.

24Cf. Rossi's introductory essay, "Sentiment and Intellect," in Essays on Sex Equality, citing, for example, Mill's description of himself at eighteen as a "dry, hard, logical machine" (12).
individuals who are rationally deficient (i.e., roughly 50% of the human race if we go by an average or a mean) are likely to have other competencies whose free expression should not be restricted. Paraphrasing Mill, then (and changing his meaning 180°):

Despotism is never a legitimate mode of government in dealing with peoples...because liberty as a principle applies to any state of things where mankind are capable of being improved by free and equal discussion.25

In other words, human beings as such are generally capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. This capability does not imply fulfillment; on the contrary, it implies limited development or room for growth. Surely the "room" required for psychological, moral and creative growth entails the liberty by which individuals may make their own unpredictable choices. Since no universal ("fully rational"?) standard adequately addresses the unique set of characteristics that define each person, imposition of such a standard is likely to frustrate rather than foster the development of (at least some) individuals. Those who are least developed among us may indeed be hurt most by being deprived of room to grow.

In their categorical distinctions between children and adults, and between fully rational and less than fully rational individuals, Mill and Dworkin assume a view of liberty which is atomistic or empirical rather than developmental. It is as if the full reality of freedom is expressed in each decision that we make, rather than that freedom is part of the developmental process, a continuing capability of living, growing human beings. Typically, children are not as free as more mature persons because they are less capable of discerning and executing alternative courses of action. But this limit to freedom comes from within, rather than from without; hence there is nothing paternalistic about it. Similar limitations occur all along the continuum of human development.

2) Another way of considering liberty is to distinguish between freedom as (a) choice (i.e., an internal decision among recognized alternatives) and as (b) externalized expression of one's choice (i.e., pursuit of a chosen alternative). While existentialist writers (such as Sartre or de Beauvoir) generally view freedom as (a), others such

25Cf. On Liberty, 14; quoted above (fn. 21).
as Mill are concerned with political or legal freedom as (b). My own view is that (a) and (b) are purely conceptual distinctions, and that the reality of freedom entails both (a) and some (b). Note, however, that the relation between (a) and (b) is such that b → a, and -a → b, but that since for any (a) there are many possible (b)'s, it is not the case that (a → b) or that (-b → -a) for any particular (b).

Accordingly, where choice is expressed in a particular action, its internal reality is implied, but where it is not so expressed, we simply do not know whether freedom as choice has been denied. In this connection, it is not clear to me that Mill/Dworkin's view that voluntary slavery should be prohibited is entirely justified. Their position fails to account for the possibility (however remote) that an individual may freely choose to limit freedom in a particular expression (b), and that an ongoing fulfillment of such a decision (cf. permanent commitment to a cause or person) could constitute a continuation of a freedom as (a), expressed through a different (b). For Mill, assent to slavery can only mark the end of freedom because the two are contradictory. To believe otherwise would require that he expand his conception of freedom to view the "slave" as possibly still capable of decision-making. As it is, his view is more atomistic than developmental because he identifies freedom with its specific expressions (b) rather than as (a) and (b). In becoming a slave an individual surrenders at least part of his/her humanity. Mill's opposition to voluntary slavery thus reinforces his insistence on the essential role of liberty (as he defines it) in human life.

3) It hardly seems necessary to elaborate a criticism of Mill's tendency to treat the second of the following propositions as implied by the first:

(a) Liberty is an essential condition for human happiness.
(b) Liberty produces happiness.

While I and others agree with (a), it seems manifestly the case that (b) is false, and that indeed liberty is often a burden or source of anxiety rather than of happiness. In contrast with Mill, Simone de Beauvoir was correct in recognizing that her affirmation of liberty for the second sex was not a concern for women's happiness; and the Grand Inquisitor in Ivan's parable was on target in maintaining that the freedom brought by Christ meant
insecurity for those redeemed.\textsuperscript{26} The history of the oppressed amply illustrates that liberation is unsettling, and that even while it makes possible a qualitatively higher level of human happiness, it does not necessarily result in that happiness.

4) In section III I explained my disagreement with Beauchamp concerning the adequacy of Mill's harm principle (where "harm" is not associated with liberty) for establishing his absolute prohibition against paternalism. To be fair to Mill, I have claimed, we must observe the interconnections between harm, happiness and liberty, and in that context, Beauchamp cannot separate his argument from Dworkin's non-contingent argument.

What emerges from the preceding analyses may now be put more succinctly: in effect it is a fusion of Position B with Dworkin's liberty principle, such that the following sketch of an argument may be presented:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(a)] Paternalism means an abridgment of freedom for the sake of other interests of the one whose freedom is abridged.
\item[(b)] But freedom is fundamental to those other interests. Therefore paternalism is never justified.
\end{enumerate}

The first premise (a) captures the essential meaning of past and current definitions of paternalism (cf. section I), but involves a hidden proposition which those other definitions also entail, viz., that the "other interests" are defined by the intervenor or "pater" rather than by the person whose freedom is restricted. The presumption here is that the "pater" has wisdom to recognize that the greater good of the individual (cf. filius or "child") requires restriction of his liberty. Moreover, the other interests intended are necessarily other than the person's freedom; if this were not the case there would be no real infringement of freedom and so no paternalism. In other words, any temporary interference for the sake of promoting liberty (cf. Dworkin's criterion) fails to exemplify the notion of paternalism with which we (and Dworkin) started.

My second premise (b) also involves missing premises, chief of which may be specified as follows:

(1) Freedom is an essential condition for human happiness (an interest).
(2) Freedom is an essential condition for morality (another interest).
(3) Where the interest of happiness conflicts with other non-moral goods or interests, happiness has priority over those other goods.

Given these premises, L⇒I, where I≠L, and -(I⇒L). I am opposed to paternalism, then, because it represents an obstacle to morality (premise 2) and happiness (premise 1). Regarding the former, it seems clear that to the extent that behavior is coerced it can only be amoral, and since I have argued this point elsewhere I will not do so again here.27 Regarding premise 1, I concur with Mill that if "happiness" is purchased at the price of liberty or rationality, it is not fully human happiness but mere (to use his word) "content." "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied," Mill wrote, "than a pig satisfied."28 Allowing that there are modes of pleasure that can be obtained precisely through the surrender of one's liberty--e.g., avoidance of anxiety, and (perhaps) of responsibility,29 there are other better or higher modes of pleasure that will necessarily be missed (e.g., creativity and moral achievement) if individuals are not permitted the liberty to make their own decisions. Allowing also that "ignorance is bliss" at times, such blissfulness will not endure for long if individuals experience the disastrous results that intellectual blindness is likely to cause.

The third premise is probably the most questionable and ambiguous of the hidden propositions. For what really is the happiness that may conflict with other non-moral goods? And what really are those other non-moral goods? In response to these questions I shall resort to the Socratic strategy of admitting "I don't know." My point is that


28Utilitarianism, in Mill's Ethical Writings, ed. by J. B. Schneewind (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 284.

29Cf. Ibid., 281, where Mill construes happiness as "absence of pain."
none of us, even if we are fully rational knows precisely what will produce another's happiness (or for that matter, in many cases, our own). Sources of happiness for individuals may be as varied as the individuals themselves, and change as the individuals change. Now if this be the case, then it is impossible to specify the other goods with which happiness may conflict for given individuals. In order to reduce this ambiguity, however, it is possible to operate on a level of careful interpretation of the pattern of an individual's responses to certain objects of interest. In other words, we can discern at least to some extent the overall value-orientation of a person whose interests we wish to promote, provided we are aware that his/her interests are not necessarily our own. Interventions based on such discernment rather than on paternalistic motives are more likely to increase happiness for each individual and for most individuals.

The above premises and concepts clearly suggest that opposition to paternalism is a necessary consequence of a utilitarian ethic. In that light, the role of a "pater" who himself defines what interests of another shall be promoted is perceived as inadequate to the developmental needs, desires and aptitudes of individuals. What is required to overcome this inadequacy is a broader and more demanding role, one which involves radical openness to the uniqueness of others, and concern to free each individual to fulfill that uniqueness. As mentioned at the start, I have elsewhere proposed the term "parentalism" as a conceptually adequate label for modes of interaction which take into account the variant developmental levels of individuals. Such an approach entails both nurturance towards independence (cf. a maternal role), and protection from harm (a paternal role). In contrast to paternalism, which necessarily restricts autonomy, parentalism provides a paradigm for determining the extent to which the autonomy, of individuals may be fully respected, so that their happiness, individuality and morality may be maximally developed. Since we all require both nurturance and protection throughout our lives, we are all children--in need of mothers as well as fathers to insure our growth. While children, we are also parents, called to facilitate rather than impede the growth of others.
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