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Lying to Make Friends

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ABSTRACT *It is intuitively wrongful to deceive people into forming a false belief. It is especially intuitively wrongful to deceive people into forming the false belief that you are their friend. Despite these intuitions, this article argues that in a surprising number of cases, deceiving people into believing you are their friend is not only permitted, but required. The article uses this result to make some important revisions and suggestions for the emergent social rights literature: (i) it shows that social rights are feasible in a wider range of cases than previously thought, and (ii) it casts doubt on whether grounding such rights on the impersonal value of genuine intimate relationships is their most fruitful grounding.*

1. Introduction

> *Fake Friend*: Annie thinks she is friends with Betty. She thinks this because her relationship with Betty closely resembles a friendship: it is constituted by a range of friendship-apt acts. However, Betty does not consider Annie a friend: she does not value Annie as a particular, nor does she value their relationship for its own sake (if at all). Instead, Betty only pretends that she values her relationship with Annie in this way.

Annie and Betty's relationship is defective insofar as it is not *really* a friendship, assuming friendship requires the relevant parties to hold appropriate attitudes towards one another, and to value the relationship for its own sake, to be instantiated. For some kinds of relationship to express intrinsic relational value, then, it is not sufficient for the relationship to be made up by the necessary acts that constitute that relationship: agents must also act from and for the right reasons.[1]

If true, this problematises the idea that persons can be required to intimately associate.[2] If A associates with B *solely*[3] to discharge a duty she owes B, the intentions A holds towards B will not be relationship-apt, making the resulting relationship defective. Consequently, a duty of the type 'provide B with a non-defective relationship' will likely be unfeasible because directly self-defeating,[4] especially if that duty is grounded in the value of non-defective relationships, as is often the case in the social rights literature.[5] (To clarify: this is not to say that social rights are unfeasible because persons will generally lack the motivation to dutifully associate with each other.[6] Instead, the worry is that a moral theory that requires A to provide B with a non-defective relationship for moral reasons would be self-defeating because moral motivation is infelicitous ground for realising non-defective relationships themselves.).

There is, however, a potential solution: empirical evidence suggests that social interaction alongside a *belief* that one enjoys non-defective relationships is sufficient to avoid the

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serious psychological harms often attached to social isolation and deprivation.[7] Assuming that duties of the type 'provide B with the *belief* that they enjoy a non-defective relationship' are not self-defeating in the same way as the duties outlined above, duties of this kind are more promising for the social rights literature.

These doxastic social duties to make others believe that they share meaningful relationships with us, while more promising in terms of feasibility, are nonetheless subject to a deep ethical problem: causing another to form and sustain a false belief as to the nature of their relationship with you will often require deception.[8] Many will at this stage be highly sceptical that one may permissibly deceive others in this way, thereby problematising the potential of such duties as an alternative to those subject to the self-defeat worry. The goal of this article is to argue that such deception is not only permitted, but often morally required; the status of doxastic associative duties as a potential balm to the thorny feasibility issues that beset some thick social rights[9] is therefore bolstered.

There are two theoretical upshots to this. The first (as mentioned) is that social rights are not generally defeated by the non-spontaneous intentionality they require of agents, even if we make feasibility assumptions amenable to their sceptics.[10] This is because duty-bearers can permissibly deceive claimants into believing they enjoy non-defective relationships. The second is that justifying interpersonal social rights by appealing to the intrinsic value of non-defective relationships is relatively difficult and may not be the most promising avenue for defenders of social rights and/or those concerned with our interests in sociability. An alternative justification grounded in the prevention of suffering, or the promotion of subjective wellbeing more generally, may be more promising.[11] As I go on to outline, this point is important for the social rights literature as a whole.

The major practical upshot is that persons will often have duties to associate with others and pretend that they hold feelings towards them when they do not. This is an important point. Often, well-meaning people will acknowledge another's desperate loneliness, but refuse to alleviate their loneliness on the assumption that pretending to be their friend would wrong them. If I am right, this worry is generally overblown.

Some clarificatory remarks are needed before we begin.

First, the following argument applies only in cases when a prospective duty-bearer cannot feasibly form a non-defective relationship with another after trying.[12] Doing this *might* be generally feasible, but this is debatable[13] and, of course, doing so will not *always be feasible*. This article only asks what agents should do when this kind of willing is not possible: what should a parent who cannot bring themselves to genuinely love their children do, for instance? This assumption also helps clarify how far the idea of social rights takes us even if we make inhospitable assumptions.

Second, I assume that social interaction *itself* is necessary to satiate one's social needs in a meaningful way, and that non-social assistance will be insufficient. For one thing, this assumption helps me set up the issue of intimate deception, which I think is interesting. For another, it is intuitive. It does not seem possible, for instance, to solve social deprivation itself just by giving lonely people cash, or better professional opportunities, or more free time. Ostensibly, many of us are hard-wired to be very badly off if we lack adequate social connections regardless of the other goods we have. Hopefully this clarifies why the article does not also consider the potential for non-social, 'compensatory' acts that might alleviate one's social needs.[14]

Third, I agree that people might have indirect social duties to influence the shared social architecture in a more positive direction.[15] However, that matter has been discussed

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elsewhere and, as I go on to argue below, such structure-directed duties will not exhaust the stock of social duties agents have: agent-directed duties are also part of the picture. Here, I am interested in agent-directed social duties.

Fourth, and finally, I do not engage here with cases involving multiple prospective duty-bearers. This is largely in the interests of space and ecumenism: work on how duties of rescue ought to be allocated is controversial, and taking that on would distract us, I think, from the central and more controversial (and less trodden) issue of intimate deception at the heart of this article. I take a placeholder view on how such duties ought to be allocated where necessary.[16]

The argument runs as follows. Section 2 briefly conceptualises what social rights are. Section 3 locates the present discussion within that broad conception. Section 4 defends the basic argument for the duty to deceive. Section 5 sets out how the basic argument applies in the context of intimate association. Section 6 considers cases involving lesser social needs. Section 7 proposes some revisions to the social rights literature considering the preceding account. Section 8 briefly considers how we should make sense of the costs of deceptive intimacy to duty-bearers. Section 9 concludes.

2. What are Social Rights?

Social rights are generally understood as claim-rights to the satisfaction of one's 'social needs'.[17] Social needs can be defined as weighty interests in social interaction. Depending on one's perspective, this formal type of right can be understood differently.

For one, people will have different views on which 'social needs' people have. Depending on one view, people have social needs insofar as social interaction is required for our flourishing as human beings.[18] On another – not mutually exclusive – view, people require social interaction instrumentally: to avoid suffering the psychological harms of loneliness, or to benefit from social resources which can enhance one's ability to pursue meaningful options.[19] There may be other such needs, of course.

For two, there is the matter of which social interactions are required to satisfy which social need. Perhaps non-affective social interaction can satisfy many social needs or, perhaps, affective social interactions – those characterised by genuine feelings of love, for instance – will also often be necessary.[20] Maybe we only require the belief that we enjoy such things. Of course, the kinds of interactions people require will depend in large part on which social needs we think people have.

For three, there is the question of what social rights entitle us *to*. It is widely assumed that if social rights exist, they do not entitle us to social interactions *as such*, but only to fair and favourable background conditions conducive to their enjoyment.[21] On this view, social rights are exclusively structure-directed. People could also, in principle, be entitled to social interaction itself but this idea is less explored and more contentious, presumably given a worry that such a right would be incompatible with basic liberal commitments.[22] I defend this more difficult, agent-directed view below.

For four, to qualify as 'rights', social claims must meet the criteria for rights. What counts as a right is controversial, and much of that literature is largely semantic here: I adopt a placeholder view where necessary.[23] However, one relevant and widely – albeit not universally – accepted condition for a right is feasibility: whether A has a right to x depends in part on whether x can be feasibly provided to them by another agent, B.[24]

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For present purposes, I define an act *v* as feasible if there is a sufficiently high likelihood of an agent *v-ing* after trying.[25]

One prominent feasibility worry about social rights is that people cannot will themselves to feel the emotions necessary to form and maintain a range of intimate relationships.[26] It has been argued that there is no right to love for this reason.[27] Above, I introduced a related worry: willing oneself to form and sustain a non-defective intimate relationship with another out of a sense of duty will be unfeasible because directly self-defeating. Trying to make progress on this issue is the goal of the article.

Different standpoints on these questions will produce different accounts of social rights and duties. After putting some meat on the bones of this theoretical framework, we can begin to tackle the question in front of us more fruitfully.

3. Grounding the Discussion

I rely on a relatively thin conception of social rights here. That is, I try to commit myself to a set of relatively non-controversial positions. I do this partly in the interests of space, but also because showing that a duty to deceive the socially needy goes through on a fairly ecumenical set of assumptions clarifies the insight's general relevance for the literature.

First, I assume that persons have social needs insofar as sufficient social interaction is required to avoid the psychological suffering attached to loneliness, the autonomy-diminishing effects of lacking a sense of belonging, and, in the case of children, adequate socio-cognitive skills gained through proper socialisation. Empirical research is unequivocal on the general welfare point[28] and the point about children: empirical evidence strongly suggests that children need decent social interactions to appropriately develop neurologically and socially – both of which are required to successfully pursue one's good from a range of valuable options.[29]

Further, children and adults both face a high risk of suffering mental health issues – such as depression – when suffering from perceived social isolation,[30] which is both a welfare cost, and a significant autonomy cost.[31] Indeed, the relationship between self-respect and the power to pursue a life of one's choosing is well documented, and intuitive:[32] if someone does not have the willpower or the confidence required to come up with, and properly commit themselves to pursuing, and/or revising their projects (where apt), how could they possibly enjoy an autonomous life? For these reasons, I take it for granted that persons have weighty social needs grounded in at least these instrumental considerations.

Second, I assume that people – perhaps aside from very young children – will largely need only to enjoy a *belief* that they are not socially deprived to have these instrumental social needs satisfied. It is empirically well-supported that one's welfare and autonomy interests in social interaction are in large part grounded in the psychological benefits one derives from a sense of belonging: one's *perceived* social connectedness with others.[33] These interests are also most severely set back when one believes one's connectedness is below a minimally decent level; that is, when one is subjectively socially deprived.

This empirical finding is also theoretically intuitive. Consider the weighty importance of feeling loved to a child's welfare and emergent autonomy interests.[34] Ostensibly, believing one is loved is the important part here for the child, and not *being* loved *per se*, because it is their *belief* that causes them to feel a sense of social connectedness, security, and self-confidence and not the fact of the relational matter *per se*.

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Indeed, when someone believes they are loved, this forms the subsequent belief that they are cared for and matter to another person in a significant way as a particular. This belief causes them to feel a sense of belonging and self-worth, thereby satisfying important social needs. In contrast, a child who is loved but does not believe that they are (perhaps because their parents are very bad at showing it) will not come to believe they matter to another person in a significant sense and, therefore, will not enjoy this secure sense of belonging. Consequently, a child who believes that their parents love and care for them – when they do not – will have their respective social needs satisfied just as well as a child with the true belief that they are loved. This, I think, should give us some comfort in the finding that the belief that one enjoys non-defective social relationships is necessary and – at least in some cases – sufficient to satisfy some very important social needs.

Relatedly, I assume that (i) deceiving someone into forming such a belief requires only functional social labour, and (ii) labour of this kind is generally feasible to perform. The first point should be straightforward enough given that particular affective dispositions are not required to mislead someone as to your true intentions towards them. Workers in the retail and service industries can attest to this. The second point holds that, while deception will not *always* be feasible – some people may be very bad at deceiving others, and some very good at spotting deception – there is nothing about associative deception *per se* that renders it the kind of act that one is highly unlikely to successfully perform after trying. Awkward family gatherings and workplace get-togethers stand as good examples.

Third, and more controversially, I assert that social rights are not *exclusively* structure-directed. This creates space for agent-directed social duties of the kind I discuss. Consider:

> *Safe Pond*: A is drowning. B can save A at the cost of dirtying his trainers. A enjoyed a fair opportunity *not* to fall in the pond: appropriate safety measures were installed, making A's current predicament a highly unlikely one.

B would wrong A if he refused to save him. This is because B can prevent serious harm to A at a reasonable cost to himself.[35] This is true despite background conditions granting A the fair opportunity to avoid the serious harm in question. To deepen this thought, suppose B contributed to the safety measures through taxation. Does the fact that B contributed his institutional fair share negate his notional duty to save? Would it be within B's rights to decline to act because he has discharged his structure-directed duties? I think not.

To tease this out, imagine A calls out for B to rescue him. B replies: 'Sorry, A. I know you are going to die, but I have already done my bit to stop things like this from happening. I can't reasonably be expected to do any more. The measures I helped put in place made it very unlikely you would need my help. Of course, you *did* have a right to the safety measures – which was satisfied – but you never had a right against drowning *per se*, so I'll be on my way'. This is obviously a cruel and poorly intentioned thing to say given that B could save A's life at the low cost of dirty trainers: it is wrong because B could prevent serious harm befalling A at a reasonable cost to himself. The importance B places on the distinction between structure-directed and agent-directed duties also seems to miss the point.

I think B's view is wrong, at least in part, because it fails to appreciate that the reasons that justify the structure-directed duty he refers to also apply interpersonally. Indeed, the ostensible, decisive consideration for the structure-directed duty accepted by B is that fatal drowning is very bad. The weight of this consideration therefore produces a *pro tanto*

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requirement for B to bear a reasonable cost (taxation) to mitigate the risk of drowning. However, if the presence of something sufficiently bad is sufficient to conjure a structure-directed duty to bear a reasonable cost in the service of its prevention, why would this same consideration necessarily fail to deliver an agent-directed duty to do the same? I find this mysterious. The only difference between the cases is that instead of bearing a cost to bring about a preventative structure or scheme to prevent x, B must now bear a cost to prevent x directly. Assuming there is no relevant normative difference in how serious harm is prevented so long as doing so is reasonable, it is hard to see why B is not required to save A directly. Notwithstanding a relevant difference, applying a structure-exclusive view of rights in cases involving serious harm is therefore implausible.

By parity of argument, I also think structure-exclusivity is implausible when it comes to social rights. A will sometimes have weighty social needs. B will sometimes be able to satisfy these needs at a reasonable cost. Consequently, even if B discharges his structure-directed duties successfully – perhaps his taxes have gone towards a slew of social clubs and accessibility measures – this will not extinguish the prospect of agent-directed social duties. It is also doubtful that the classical liberal/libertarian view on freedom of association[36] – that all have a stringent associative power to refuse association with anyone for virtually any reason – is the right one.[37] The best account of social rights will therefore include structure-directed and agent-directed elements, where appropriate. Here, I am interested in exploring a potential problem for agent-directed social rights. Of course, the devil is in the detail and, at this stage, this sort of move by analogy is little more than a proof of concept. How it ultimately applies in the social case will depend on a number of details that I spell out later. So I ask eager readers to bear with me until then.

These assumptions constitute the building blocks of the duty to intimately deceive. Defending and articulating the permissibility of such deception, and consequently making progress on the feasibility issue for social rights, occupies the rest of the article.

4. The Basic Argument for Deception

In some cases, one will be required to deceive in order to achieve an important moral goal. Consider:

> *Murderer*: Murderer is trying to kill Victim because he hates him. Bystander knows that Victim is hiding in the wardrobe, and that Murderer's intention is to kill Victim. Murderer asks Bystander where Victim is. If Bystander tells the truth, Victim will be murdered. If Bystander lies, Victim's life will be saved.

Bystander is required to lie to Murderer in order to save Victim's life. This is because deception is a proportionate means to securing the end of saving Victim's life, just as breaking Murderer's arm or, perhaps, even killing him would be if these were the only options on the table.[38] This shows that deception is not a hard constraint on what one can be required or permitted to do. Even if deception is always harmful to those who are deceived,[39] which is likely, one will nevertheless be required to deceive when this is necessary to achieve a proportionate end. We therefore ought to reject the quite extreme view that lying is always forbidden.

Some may doubt that *Murderer* is very instructive in the associative case because what explains Bystander's permission to deceive in *Murderer* is that Murderer, being a

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wrongdoer, has made himself liable to be deceived.[40] On one view, *innocent* agents do not make themselves liable to harm and, therefore, it will be impermissible to deceive those who are not wrongdoers, even when a great good can be secured.[41] This view is not correct. Consider:

> *Innocent Murderer*: Like *Murderer*, but Murderer is only pursuing Victim because he has been involuntarily drugged.

I find it plausible that Murderer is not liable to bear any special costs in this case given that he has done nothing to forfeit his rights against being lied to. There is also no 'evil' project that Murderer is culpably trying to bring Bystander into:[42] he is not trying to do anything. However, it is clear that Bystander is still required to lie to Murderer to secure the end of saving Victim's life. Consequently, deception cannot only be permissible when it is aimed at those who have forfeited their rights in some way. This makes the claim that we can deceive the socially deprived more promising.

On one view,[43] agents can become liable to bear costs merely by being the cause of some rights-violation, even if they are not culpable *or* responsible. I do not find this an intuitive view. Famously, it could tell us that a person who turns off their bedroom light which, unbeknownst to them, will give someone a fatal electric shock, would make themselves liable to bear significant – perhaps lethal – costs to avoid that harm. This would tell us that Innocent Murderer *may* be lied to, to but only because he is liable by virtue of his causal relationship to a potential rights-violation. I find this hard to believe. Presumably, we want principles that allow agents to control – as much as is possible and fair – what they make themselves liable to, and how others may treat them.[44] Such a responsibility-independent view would thereby expose agents to liability to harm that they had no chance of foreseeing, let alone intending, and, for this reason, we should reject such a view. I think *Innocent Murder* therefore tells us that sometimes agents will be required to deceive others even when they are non-liable.

Perhaps deception is forbidden, however, when the beneficiary of deception is also the person being deceived. In *Murderer*, one agent was deceived to benefit a third party, and this might distract us from intimate association cases where the person being deceived is also the person the deception intends to benefit. But I do not think this difference matters much, at least in core cases. Consider:

> *Spy*: Spy is an intelligence officer. If those close to her knew her secret, they would be exposed to a high risk of harm by members of other intelligence agencies. Father asks Spy what she does for work.

I find it highly intuitive that Spy is required to lie to Father in order to keep him safe, and protect him from the very high risks that he would face if he knew the truth. This is because there are good reasons for Father to be kept in ignorance, and for him not to have the power to create a duty that Spy shares this information when he requests it.[45] There are a few ways to deepen this thought. One way is to argue that it is not rational for Father to have his desire to be told the truth satisfied given that he has (or ought to have) a stronger desire to avoid exposure to a high risk of serious harm.[46] Another possibility is that, even though it could be rational for Father to have this desire, it is not reasonable, given that the objective value of risking serious harm to himself is incomparable to the value of having his question truthfully answered. Finally, we might appeal to the idea that Father has self-regarding duties not to expose himself to serious harms or other kinds of

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treatment when doing so is reasonably avoidable, and Spy's deception therefore enables Father to satisfy those duties. More could be said, but I think these brief remarks show that it is highly plausible that deception can still be required in cases when the person being deceived is a non-liable, intended beneficiary of the deception.

An interesting point to add here is that it is likely even *easier* to justify imposing costs on the individual who stands to benefit from the creation of a necessary cost, than it is to justify imposing that cost on an unrelated third party.[47] This makes deception in the associative cases we are considering even easier to justify. Consider:

> *Victim or Bystander*: Victim is drowning in a shallow pond. Rescuer can save Victim in one of two ways. Method 1 would cause Victim to lose a finger. Method 2 would cause Bystander to lose a finger.

I find it intuitive that Rescuer should opt for Method 1, and save Victim in the way that makes Victim bear the necessary costs of his rescue instead of a bystander. One explanation might be that Victim stands to gain directly from the costs generated, which makes it easier to justify the imposition of the cost to *him*, as opposed to an innocent third party. Perhaps this is because the cost is in some sense more relevant to Victim and his life, and we might think it is more appropriate to allocate costs on the basis of such relevance where possible. Alternatively, perhaps we should generally favour principles that allow agents to decide what costs they bear and risks they expose themselves to *ceteris paribus*. We might do better to enhance this value of control by allocating costs to those who stand to benefit directly from them: in this case, such a principle will lessen the impact of serendipity to the distribution of burdens, which seems like a good thing. I do not press hard on these potential explanations though and, if I have provided two wrong explanations of the underlying principle, I hope that the appeal to intuition is forceful enough for the reader to at least bear this in mind in the following sections.

Detours aside, the main lesson is this: it might be intuitive to think that deception is always wrongful, at least when launched against innocents, even when it is intended to do good, and especially when it intends to benefit the target of the deception. But this is mistaken. When deception is a proportionate means of achieving a valuable moral end, such as the prevention of serious harms, one will be required to deceive. With this account of deception in hand, we now have the basic theoretical ingredients to defend deceptive intimacy.

5. Deception and Intimate Association

To keep the analysis clean, let us begin with a clear case of social deprivation: a socially needy agent A faces ongoing psychological suffering and a lack of autonomy, and this will continue if they are not furnished with the belief that they enjoy non-defective relationships. Let us also assume that deception is necessary to inculcate and sustain this belief: B cannot feasibly provide A with a non-defective relationship, nor the true belief that A is not socially deprived, even if they tried.

Would B act wrongly if he deceived A into believing they shared a non-defective relationship?

I think not. We have already established that deceit is not inherently wrongful. Further, even in cases involving the deception of an innocent agent who is the intended beneficiary,

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deception is not wrongful when doing so is a necessary and proportionate means to a great good. In cases of social deprivation, the harms of intimate deception and the disvalue of the defective relationship it produces seem to pale in comparison to the significance of the harms of psychological distress and autonomy diminishment that weigh on the other side. It therefore becomes hard to give a principled account of why it would be wrong for B to deceive A in this case. On the contrary: deceiving in this way is seemingly *required* by the lights of the preceding analysis concerning deception. In light of this, I believe the burden of proof should shift: we should assume intimate deception is permissible, at least in cases involving serious harms, notwithstanding a decisive argument to the contrary.

This thought, while striking, becomes more plausible once we analyse a relevant case. Consider:

> *Grandma*: Grandma is socially isolated most of the time. Grandson is the only person who visits her regularly, and this makes her feel loved and appreciated. Grandson does not care about Grandma, though, and only visits her because he believes he is required to. He has deceived her into believing he really does cherish the time they spend together. If Grandma did not have this belief, she would cease to value Grandson's company, and her isolation would cause her to experience emotional agony and depression.

I find it intuitive that Grandson is required to deceptively associate with Grandma and give her the false belief that he has relationship-apt intentions. This is because his deceptive association would prevent Grandma from experiencing agony and losing the will and confidence to pursue meaningful projects. Plausibly, these two considerations are of a *much* greater value to Grandma than the harm of deception is to Grandma and Grandson[48] and, therefore, deception is a proportionate means to this end. If Grandson were *not* permitted to deceive, he would be required to allow Grandma to experience these great harms – but the costs of this to Grandma are severe. It is clear to me that it is much better from Grandma's point of view – and the impersonal point of view – for Grandson to visit and deceive than it is for Grandma to know the truth. In this way, Grandma is akin to Father in *Spy*. For these reasons, I believe Grandson is required to deceptively associate.

There are many reasons to feel uneasy about the case and the conclusion I have drawn. However, I do not think any of these worries are decisive against the claim that Grandson is required to deceive.

First, we may lament the defective nature of the relationship, and its resulting disvalue, as we did in *Fake Friend*. It is true that the love present in the relationship is one-sided, and the relationship cannot be considered intrinsically valuable on this score. We might feel sorry for Grandma for this reason. This is a regrettable fact. However, if we assume that giving Grandma a genuine relationship is not possible, the question of whether Grandson can be required to deceive Grandma remains. Given the preceding analysis, I think it is highly plausible that Grandson is required to deceive.

Second, we might wonder whether the deception is truly proportionate. Grandson's deception is *particularly* harmful in this case because it causes Grandma to lack a fundamental kind of self-knowledge: she is misled about Grandson's intentions, and therefore comes to form false beliefs not only about her relationship with Grandson, but also about the shape of her life and the value it contains as a whole. This puts pressure on the

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permissibility of deception in this case: it clarifies that the deceptive costs imposed to secure the goods intended are more grave than may appear.

Even if this is true, though, I find it hard to believe it could be so weighty a consideration as to render deception forbidden. This is partly because the costs Grandma would experience without the false belief would be *much* worse than the cost of her ignorance, even on this wider analysis. It should go without saying that both Grandma *and* Grandson have very strong reasons to alleviate or prevent Grandma's emotional agony, and inability to pursue projects. If the deceptive relationship did not exist, all of these things of great value to Grandma would disappear, and she would be reduced to a painful life devoid of much good. Therefore, even if there is a material cost to Grandma's self-knowledge as a result of Grandson's deception, it is going to be a struggle to persuasively argue that this renders Grandson's deception forbidden, given that the harms of social deprivation are so weighty, and the benefits it enables Grandma to enjoy are so great. I do admit this is a difficult objection to grapple with, however. To do it justice, I investigate a similar thought in more detail below during my discussion of Brownlee's experience machine.[49] To flag: I do not find it decisive even on that closer examination.

Third, we might think that associating with Grandma is unacceptably paternalistic, and therefore forbidden, because it aims to benefit her without appropriately taking into account what she wants for herself.[50] The basic thought here is that even if it would be *very* bad for Grandma if she were not deceived, the choice of whether or not she is deceived – and whether or not she bears those costs – should be down to her. By lying to her, and keeping her in ignorance, Grandson wrongs her not because the deception is disproportionate, but because Grandma's rightful control over her life and the relationships therein has been trampled on.

Whilst I am sympathetic to the objection, I do not find it decisive. For one, objections to paternalism, or defences of a very wide permission to consent to, or refuse, certain kinds of treatment are implausible when weighty objective harms weigh in the balance. Consider:

> *Boulder*: Two boulders are rolling down a cliff towards Victim. Big Boulder will kill Victim, whereas Small Boulder will break Victim's leg. Bystander only has the power to destroy one of the boulders, averting *that* harm from befalling Victim. Victim tells Bystander that she wants him to destroy Small Boulder, given that she would rather die than have her leg broken.[51]

Bystander is clearly required to destroy Big Boulder, even though Victim is asking for him to destroy Small Boulder, and has a preference for death. This is most easily explained by appealing to the view that the consent or refusal of a certain kind of treatment is only valid under certain circumstances.[52] Some plausible limits on such validity, as we saw in *Spy*, are whether or not it is rational, reasonable, and in keeping with self-regarding duties. On any of these metrics, it is fairly obvious that consenting to being crushed to death when this can be avoided at the cost of a broken leg is not valid. If this is true, I think that we should conclude that the socially deprived may not validly refuse deceptive intimate association in the relevant cases, either. Deception is harmful, of course, but it is not sufficiently harmful compared to the harms of social deprivation to make a refusal of it valid when it is necessary to prevent the latter. The socially deprived are reliably faced with such harms, so this point seems to be instructive for the cases at hand.

Of course, this is not to say that one's preferences or attempts at refusal – even when one is being irrational or unreasonable – are to be ignored. Such things also create sometimes

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decisive reasons for persons to be treated in certain ways. But to argue that such reasons will be decisive to render deception forbidden when such serious harms are on the line is a difficult argument to make, and I am not sure how one could go about persuasively making it.

For another thing, it is generally unfeasible to use deception as an effective means *after* you have improved an agent's epistemic options, meaning that the prospective deceiver must often decide whether or not to deceive independently of giving the target an opportunity to refuse. Consider:

> *Paramedic*: Paramedic arrives on the scene of a motorcycle crash, and begins to assist Victim. Victim has suffered serious injuries, and may not walk again. Given the nature of Victim's injuries, more severe complications are likely if Victim becomes anxious or upset. Victim asks Paramedic how bad his injuries are.[53]

Bracketing the question of whether Paramedic is permitted or required to lie in this case – I happen to think she is required – it is clear that granting Victim the opportunity to refuse the deception is not possible while retaining deception as an effective means. Suppose that Paramedic was unsure of what to do and, worried that deceiving Victim would wrong him, responded by asking: 'Do you want me to be honest?' Asking this implies that Victim may be in trouble, and invites Victim to believe that Paramedic's subsequent answer will be unreliable. In other words, giving the option to refuse makes later deception ineffective and may impede Paramedic from saving Victim from very serious harms. As a result, one will often be unable to improve an agent's ability to refuse deception without undermining one's ability to deceive, which may be the only means one has to save. Agents will thereby often be required to decide whether to deceive or not *without* giving the agent in question the actual opportunity to refuse.

In light of this, we should try and capture the force of this consideration – without forgoing deception as an effective means entirely – through an appeal to hypothetical consent: we might consider whether the claimant would refuse deception *if they were asked*. In some cases, such a consideration will likely be decisive if we care about respecting others' preferences for how they are treated, which we should. A limited duty to gather evidence on the preferences of the target may also exist on this score. However, when great harms are on the line, and the objective costs of deception are relatively small, the question of whether even hypothetical consent will constitute a valid refusal is crucial, and the previous discussion casts doubt on this view.

Return to *Boulder*. Suppose Victim is now unconscious, and we are unable to ask him what his preferences are. Bystander is, however, evidence-relative justified in thinking that Victim would want to be crushed to death rather than having their leg broken. Clearly, this would not constitute a valid refusal. This is for the same reason that an *actual* attempt at refusal did not: the considerations that render Victim's refusal invalid are still present. Further, I suspect that most people – if push came to shove – would prefer to live a life containing deceptive relationships compared to a terrible and painful life without such relationships. Practically, this consideration may therefore not have much importance, at least in serious, social deprivation cases.

Fourth, one might be sceptical of my conclusion in *Grandma* because our intuitions might be piggy-backing on the familial relationship – 'is it *really* true that Grandson does not care for Grandma?'[54] If they are, *Grandma* might not tell us much about permissions to deceive strangers, given that *Grandma* is relevant only to potentially valuable familial

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relationships. A related worry is that our intuitions may be responding to notions of reciprocity or familial duties, which might be misleading us. But I do not think this is true. For one, the duty to deceive is already observed in cases between strangers, such as *Murderer*. For two, it is independently plausible that an agent will sometimes be required to deceptively associate with a stranger, whether this is a role-based obligation or not.

Reconsider *Paramedic*. Let us again suppose that the only way to avoid serious harm is for Paramedic to deceive Victim into forming the belief that he is not paralysed. To do this, Paramedic must be reassuring, speak calmly, and pretend that he is not worried. Imagine Paramedic must ask Victim about his day, be friendly towards him, and create a positive social interaction that is pleasant and ostensibly genuine. Further, let us assume that Paramedic is not naturally gregarious, and pretending to be pleasant and cheery is a chore for him. Despite this, it is clear to me that Paramedic is required to deceptively associate, for comparable reasons we observed in *Grandma*. Moreover, for present purposes, it does not matter whether or not Paramedic believes he is so required because it is part of his job, or because he feels the pull of an impersonal moral duty. The case merely highlights that one is plausibly required to socially deceive others when grave harms are on the line, and doing so is reasonable. Perhaps reciprocity and/or role-relativity can increase the burdens one must bear in such cases, and ground decisive reasons for why the duty should fall to *them* rather than others. However, assuming that duties of aid need not be dependent on these things to get off the ground, it is plausible that they are not fundamentally dependent on such considerations. What this tells us, I think, is that the intuitions and related principles we observe in *Grandma* are likely generalisable to cases involving strangers, so long as the basic facts remain the same: proportionality, necessity, and reasonable sacrifice.

Consequently, when deception is a proportionate, effective, and necessary means to prevent the serious bads of social deprivation, individuals will be required to do so. Moreover, this thought also applies in the context of strangers and, *a fortiori*, those who we know of but do not know intimately: classmates, neighbours, colleagues, and so on. With this in hand, we can answer the original question: A *is* required to deceive B.

6. Lesser Social Needs

Before moving on to unpack the importance of this claim for the social rights literature, it will pay to examine how these thoughts apply in cases involving weaker social needs than those relevant to social deprivation.[55] Indeed, when the stakes are very high, it is relatively easy to justify the costs of deception to duty-bearers and victims. Are agents also required to deceptively associate when lesser social needs are on the line? What if the potential benefits of social deception were just making another person's day, or helping them become more confident when starting a new job? Could these kinds of lesser social needs also trigger duties to deceptively associate?

I certainly think such duties are possible in principle. To motivate this thought, consider:

> *Nettle*: A has been distracted while riding his bicycle, and is about to crash into a bush of stinging nettles. B sees this, and can save A by walking at pace and waving his arm at him.[56]

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My view is that B is required to alert A to the danger, and he would wrong A if he failed to do this. This is because (i) A is facing a non-trivial cost, (ii) B can prevent A from bearing this cost at a relatively much lower cost to himself, and (iii) the cost B must bear to achieve this end is sufficiently low in absolute terms. That is, this is a classic rescue case, and we should treat it accordingly. Of course, the stakes are much lower than in the other cases we have considered. Consequently, the severity of B's wrongdoing would be commensurably lower: perhaps he would only be liable to a mild ticking off or a disapproving gesture if he failed to assist A. Nevertheless, I still think we are right to acknowledge a wrong in this case.

If this is true, we should – by parity of argument – draw the same conclusion in cases involving intimate deception: so long as the costs of deception are reasonable to bear, B is required to deceive, even when the potential gain is relatively weak. Consider:

> *Lunch*: A does not have any friends at work, and so he faces eating lunch on his own again in the office canteen. Eating on his own makes A feel very awkward and embarrassed given that it makes him believe that nobody likes him. B notices A's predicament, and could prevent A's loneliness by giving him the belief that he values his company: sitting down, exchanging some friendly words, and pretending that he enjoys chatting with B while he eats his lunch. B finds A quite boring, however, and would rather sit with his good friend C.

My sense is that B is required to eat lunch with A for the same reasons that B is required to alert A to the danger of the nettles: a sufficient net-good can be achieved for another at a reasonable cost to oneself. Indeed, while eating lunch with someone you find boring and pretending you are enjoying their company for 30 minutes is a chore, it is not a grave cost, nor is it an unreasonable or disproportionate one given bearing it will prevent another from a sufficiently greater harm. (For what it is worth, I think many social norms regulating our interactions with older family members, in-laws, and colleagues reflect something like this general intuition.) Moreover, I think this is true even if we assume that A is not socially deprived: even if we suppose he has friends and loving family outside of work, I still find it intuitive that B is required to spend time with A. In principle, then, I do think lesser social needs can conjure duties to deceptively associate, so long as the costs of deception are appropriately less.

One point of complication, however, is that deception also represents a cost to the one who is deceived. How should we make sense of this? A rough and ready way is to consider the prospective net-benefit of deception to the victim (deceptive gain versus the deceptive loss) against the costs of deceiving for the duty-bearer, checking that the costs are proportionate and reasonable for the duty-bearer in the circumstances. This method is intuitive: what reason would A have to prevent some cost x to B, if the only way to achieve this was to simultaneously cause a cost equivalent (or greater) than x to B? Obviously, this would be pointless.

Moreover, the net-benefit of deceiving must be *sufficiently* great relative to the costs to the duty-bearer in deceiving – the mere existence of a net-benefit is not sufficient. To motivate this point, consider:

> *Fingers*: A can prevent B from having her fingers crushed for x months by diverting a boulder. A can only do this by allowing his own fingers to be crushed for y months.

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In cases where $x > y$, but only by a slight margin, I do not think A must save B. To tease this out, suppose that A can prevent B from five months of broken fingers, only at a cost of four months of broken fingers for himself. I find it implausible that A is required to suffer this cost *even though* this would bring about a better situation from the impersonal point of view. Presumably, what explains A's permission to refrain from bearing this lesser cost for the greater good of another is the existence of an agent-relative prerogative[57] that allows A to weigh what is good from her personal point of view more heavily when considering what to do. This explanation of the intuitive phenomena is supported by the fact that in a variation of the case where a bystander has the power to divert the boulder to either A *or* B, he ought to divert to whoever faces the lowest cost (A). There is no agent-relative prerogative to consider here, meaning B should simply do what is best.

Applying this to intimate deception cases, I believe we can say the following. When A can satisfy a social need of B's through deception, the satisfaction of this need will bring about a sufficient net-good – calculated according to what B stands to gain from the deception versus what A *and* B stand to lose as a result of the deception – *and* the costs of deception are reasonable for both A and B to bear, A will be required to deceptively associate. As I have said, this will be true even when the social need in question is not particularly weighty in absolute terms.

Practically, such a duty will require individuals to engage in a number of 'petty' deceptions when associating with others; that is, deceptions that do not intend to give the impression of wanting a full friendship, but nevertheless containing some relationship-apt feelings. Further, given that allowing an individual to hold a false belief about your feelings towards them is likely much easier to justify than actively taking steps to inculcate such a belief in others – as per the general doing and allowing distinction[58] – it is also likely that agents will often be required to refrain from correcting those who benefit from their false beliefs regarding their relationships. *Allowing* one to hold a false belief is also, generally, much less costly to the duty-bearers' interests than would be required by active deception, and so it passes through the criteria more easily on this score.[59] Maybe, once the hard work is done deceiving, one can coast along by allowing the ignorance to continue. If this is true, such duties would be even *easier* to justify, even in serious cases.

One final word on all this. I mentioned above that the objection from paternalism is generally defeated in social deprivation cases given that weighty objective harms will void attempts at, or preferences for, refusal. Plausibly, this thought does not extend to the lesser cases I have mentioned, because they lack serious harms. I admit that it *could* be rational, reasonable, and in keeping with self-regarding duties to prefer a lonely lunch over a deceitful yet pleasant encounter. Duty-bearers must therefore consider seriously the preferences and beliefs of a given target when deciding whether or not to deceive them in these petty cases: they must consult the evidence available to them regarding what the individual in question would prefer, and whether they would likely refuse deception if given a fair opportunity to do so. Depending on the general state of beliefs, this might rule out very many petty deceptions, rendering them largely *forbidden*, or permit a great many of them. This must be taken case by case, and will largely depend on different cultures and contexts. Of course, the thought that what justice requires will depend on the preferences and beliefs of those subject to it is not a novel one.[60]

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7. What Does this Mean for Social Rights?

I think accepting the preceding argument has important implications for some prominent views in the social rights literature.

First, the account defuses some worries about the feasibility of social rights, and gives us good reason to consider a wider class of social rights feasible. Some have argued, for instance, that one cannot love in a valuable way unless loving is spontaneous and responds to the loved as a particular, and the right to love is – and rights to enjoy meaningful relationships in general are – therefore conceptually invalid for similar reasons to those outlined at the start.[61] This might be true, but the present account shows that even if it is, social rights will still be feasible given that this point has no force against duties to make someone *believe* they are loved. As noted above, such beliefs can be feasibly and permissibly achieved through deception and, therefore, so long as the right in question is not to a non-defective relationship as such, there is no issue. The feasible set of social rights is therefore much wider and more robust than sometimes thought.

Second, the account shows that Liao's claim that children have a right to be loved, and that this right cannot be properly satisfied with merely deceiving someone into thinking they are loved, is a bit too quick.[62] As clarified above, this depends on what the ultimate justification of the right to love *is*. Liao himself argues that in the absence of feeling loved, children face serious harms, and that this is a core justification for the right in question. But he says that giving someone 'fake' love would be ineffective given that it would be akin to giving someone who is owed money fake bank notes: they would *believe* that they have been given what they are owed, but they have been conned. Their social needs are therefore left wholly unsatisfied.

I think this analogy fails to say much because it relies on a concealed tautology: we are told one cannot satisfy the right to be loved through deception because the right to love is the right to non-deceptive love. Analogously, the right in the example, for Liao, is to real notes and not fake ones. But let us imagine that the justification of my giving you the notes just *is* that you can go and use them to buy yourself some food. Imagine you are starving: I only have fake notes on me, and I know that if you knew they were fake, you would let yourself starve to death, or would be unable to successfully deceive the shopkeeper into giving you some food. Consequently, I give you fake notes instead of nothing at all, because doing so is a means to save your life. In this case, I feel strongly that my deception is a proportionate means to securing the end of preventing serious harm from befalling you, and I do not owe you anything else, even if we regret the fact that I had to deceive you in giving you what you were owed. This makes Liao's analogy look strained if we assume – as we should – that at least one key justification for the right to be loved is a child's need to believe they are loved to prevent serious harms.

As a result, children – and adults – have a less contentious right to *feel* loved than actually be loved, and this avoids some potentially thorny issues of feasibility that beset Liao's account. Further, on Liao's view, if you try to love and fail, you have done your duty, and may give up. Alternatively, I say this: you should first try to love and, if you don't succeed, you should pretend you have succeeded.

Third, Brownlee suggests that social rights entitle people not only to believing that they have decent social connections and opportunities, but to actually enjoying decent social connections and opportunities.[63] By 'actually enjoying', I think Brownlee (at least) means persons enjoying social connections which are non-defective. She asks us to consider:

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> *False World*: Imagine that Sophie is coercively confined to an experience machine, and consequently has no human contact. Once in the machine, she is unaware that she is totally isolated. She believes she is leading a life populated with normal people.

Sophie is seemingly wronged for various reasons in this case. It is highly plausible, though, that one key bad-making feature of the case is that Sophie does not have any access to non-defective social connections – or, indeed, any real connections at all. From this, we might conclude that it would be wrong to deceive persons in the way discussed here given that this would mean that they would not be enjoying 'actually decent' social opportunities: they would be coercively placed in something like Brownlee's experience machine. If this is true, perhaps deception is forbidden after all, and social rights ought to be more limited in their scope and justification.

I do not buy this, however. Even if I agree with the intuitive force of *False World*, and think that coercively confining people into experience machines is wrongful, this does not show that people are wronged by virtue of their not being provided with non-defective intimate relationships. As I have already stated, it is doubtful that such relationships can be provided *by right* given the necessity of holding the appropriate intentions in forming and sustaining such relationships, and the intention of doing one's duty being inapt for this purpose. Whilst a lack of non-defective relationships might be a serious bad-making feature of Sophie's life in *False World* then, this is not enough to establish that failing to provide people with such things constitutes an injustice.

Furthermore, given the constraints of the specific situations we face, we can be required to desire events that it would be irrational for us to desire in other circumstances.[64] If Sophie had a choice the feasible set of which was living under the facts of *False World*, or living a life full of non-defective relationships, it would in my view be irrational – and perhaps violating of self-regarding duties – if she chose to stay in the former. It would also be wrong for someone to make that choice for Sophie, or refuse to bring her into the better situation if doing so were reasonable. However, if the feasible set consisted of staying in *False World*, or living in a socially isolated world beset by psychological agony and a severe diminishment of autonomy, it is clear to me that it would then be irrational and potentially wrongful to *leave False World*. This shows, I think, that while Brownlee has a point, the importance of her point depends on what the feasible set consists of for socially deprived people and those well-placed to help them in the here and now. This will vary case by case, but the point of principle should be clear.

Some may reject my view because they believe a decision to stay in the experience machine – let alone put someone into one! – is *always* worse for that agent than living in the real world, regardless of what that reality might look like:[65] better authentic, isolated misery than manufactured, socially abundant happiness, we might say.[66] Let us call this the *pro-reality view* (Reality). If correct, Reality would put serious pressure on my defence of the permission to deceive – especially, we might think, when the stakes are high and the deceptive relationship has great significance for one's life, as it does in *Grandma*. Luckily, I do not think Reality is correct.

For one, Reality cannot plausibly be justified by appeal to what would be best for people, in the sense that refusing *False World*-style 'deception' would always improve how well an agent's life goes relative to being deceived. Consider:

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> *Agony or Bliss*: A and B each have a medical condition which means they will live in torturous agony for their whole lives. B, however, can plug himself into an experience machine which will make him believe that he is living a different life free of pain. B decides to plug himself into the machine.[67]

I think it is obvious that B's life goes *much* better than A's. This is because torturous agony is incredibly bad for a person's life, and great pleasure is incredibly good for a person's life, regardless of whether these mental states are 'manufactured' or not. Presumably, this is because the respective mental states (and their inherent value) would always be authentic, and therefore of genuine (dis)value; the real cleavage between the experience machine and unfiltered reality would not be about the authenticity of one's mental states, but instead between the authenticity of the *cause* of those mental states; that is, one's beliefs about what has happened in one's life, and so on. I assume that everyone believes that undeserved pain and inoffensive pleasure are inherently (dis)valuable, and are important factors in determining how well a person's life has gone, so I am not sure how a Reality defender could plausibly avoid this point. Therefore, if the choice is between authentic abject misery, or simulated bliss, one's life will surely go better all else equal with the latter choice. Plausibly, this is true whether we are hedonists or pluralists about value, given that pleasure will always be an important determinant of overall wellbeing, and the authentically miserable life has little else going for it.[68] Ergo, when the stakes are high, the experience machine will make a person's life go better than uncompromising reality will: Reality cannot therefore plausibly be a claim about what would make one's life *actually* go better.

The justificatory idea behind Reality, then, must be something like the following: choosing authentic misery, whilst potentially making one's life go much worse, is always required because we have a self-regarding duty to respect our status as beings that are more than mere vessels for pleasurable experiences, or containers of impersonal value.[69] Plugging into the experience machine – or plugging someone else into one – is therefore forbidden even if it makes one's life go better, because it fails to treat that person appropriately *qua* person: it violates their dignity as a human being. While somewhat mysterious, I find something like this thought quite attractive. But I still think it fails to justify Brownlee's insistence on non-defective relationships.

Firstly, I am not sure why taking steps to make one's life go as well as possible (especially when the stakes are high) does not express respect for oneself, and one's status, as a person. I would even go so far as to say that allowing one's life to go very badly despite being able to do something to make it go objectively much better would also potentially violate one's self-regarding duty to respect oneself as a person. Is the ability to experience and embody certain kinds of value in one's life not also important to one's status as a person? The same applies, I think, to allowing someone to stay in experience machines, or to place them there – if this is *really* the best thing for them and their life, why do we disrespect them by taking steps to help them, assuming that their preference for refusal is not decisive? Surely, if we take their interests seriously as persons, and respect them as such, it is at least plausible that we respect people by doing what is good for them, as opposed to leaving them to their fate.

Secondly, intimate deception would not be a totalising illusion as the experience machine in *False World* is, and would in fact *enable* persons to pursue more things of authentic value: social and non-social. This is because social deprivation diminishes one's autonomy. With a sense of belonging, people are *more* likely to form non-defective

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relationships, take on and grapple with challenges, and pursue meaningful projects. The experience machine, in this case, is therefore one that will almost always enable an agent to experience more authentic value overall than they would without it, because it grants the confidence and self-esteem necessary for autonomy. Why should plugging into this limited experience machine wrong us? Is it rational to choose a life containing less authentic value just to minimise the prevalence of the inauthentic causes of that value? To me, this is a perplexing and harsh requirement. I therefore reject even this status-centric rendering of Reality, and maintain that deceptive intimacy, even if experience-machine-like, will often be required.

If our hostile assumptions about the feasibility of granting others non-defective relationships is correct, the social rights to love and connection that Liao and Brownlee articulate are perhaps more plausibly operative as rights to *believe* one is loved or socially connected. I admit that there is something regrettable about this. But what we owe people is sensitive to what is possible for us, and them, and when we cannot give someone a non-defective relationship, giving them a false belief that they enjoy such a relationship will be required.

8. The Costs to Duty-Bearers

In this section I want to briefly consider how we should understand the costs for duty-bearers.

Even if one is convinced of the above argument, there may be concern regarding how dismal the situation is for those who must deceive. Plausibly, deception will represent both welfare and resource costs: deceiving someone, especially over time, will not only be sometimes an uncomfortable experience – boring, perhaps stressful for those who value honesty – but it will also place demands on our time and energy. How should we think about these costs?

I think the short point to make here is that, sometimes, morality requires agents to bear real costs for others. Sometimes we have to give up our fingers, and other times we have to give up on our preference not to deceive, and in yet others we may have to take on the mental burden of keeping up a lie. All of these things are costs that help inform the ethics of a situation.

Of course, the general rule of positive duty between strangers is that when prospective costs are reasonable, and a great good can be achieved if one bears them, one must do so.[70]

The key question is therefore whether the costs of deception are reasonable for duty-bearers to shoulder, and whether a great good can be achieved if they bear them. The answer to this is 'it depends'. In some cases, deception will be too great a cost to one's integrity, or too painful to keep up. Sometimes a great good will not be achieved if the costs of deception are paid – when someone is just socially under-stimulated, or wishes they had more interesting friends, for instance. In these cases, prospective duty-bearers will not be required to bear any costs. But sometimes, in Goldilocks cases, when prospective costs are reasonable in light of the goods at stake, one will be required to deceptively associate. All I can say here is that I hope the preceding account has done a good job at explaining why and when cases of deceptive association will be just right to produce a duty.

An objector may press again: but where is the limit? How much can a duty-bearer really be expected to give up in the name of others' social needs? On the one hand, if we set the

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bar of demandingness very low, the duty looks more intuitive, but it does so at the expense of relevance: it fails to really satiate the underlying social needs that motivate the duty in the first place. Petty, one-off deceptions cannot a friendship make, we might think. Alternatively, if we stipulate that such duties can be very demanding, we have the opposite problem: the duty looks counterintuitive yet retains its efficacy in satisfying the relevant rights. Could it really be true that I must dedicate so much of my time and energy to someone I do not care about? There is, then, perhaps an inescapable and unpalatable trade-off no matter how we select our level. Furthermore, this objection is even harder to meet given that deception is ongoing, meaning the costs duty-bearers will be required to bear will also be repeated. The account we have been discussing may not tell enough, then, to fully assess its contours.[71]

Whilst a lively and important concern, I do not think it is decisive. It is, however, illuminating, so it will pay to take some time to respond to it.

First, while this is a tricky problem for this account, it is not endemic to it. Indeed, I think it is a problem for all moral theories that recognise (impersonal) positive duties. To illustrate, consider:

> *Pond*: Victim is drowning in a shallow pond. Bystander can save at the cost of his expensive suit.

Almost all accept the verdict that Bystander is required to save at the cost of his expensive clothes. But is Bystander required to lose a finger? A foot? A leg? As the costs increase, the duty of rescue becomes less intuitive, while the patient's underlying interest is increasingly protected (and vice versa). The same could be said about the duty I have outlined here. What counts as a reasonable cost depends on our underlying normative theory and how we spell this out. But this is not a worry for the account as such: all we need say is that whatever the right view of moral demandingness is, we are required to bear costs up to that point in order to discharge our doxastic social duties. This might be a highly demanding duty, or it might not be; this will depend on the best theory. The objector is correct, though, that the more which is demanded of us in service of this end, the more revisionary the duty will be for commonsense morality.

Second, the costs of deceptive intimacy need not be very high to retain efficacy in satiating even important social needs. This defangs the worry to some extent as it shows that we need not adopt highly counterintuitive views on moral demandingness for the doxastic duties I have covered here to be practically important.

For one thing, most 'friendships' do not require much more than taking the odd phone-call, replying to text messages, meeting up occasionally, and maybe helping out with an errand now and then. To be sure, these are costs. But these do not strike me as obviously supererogatory ones, especially in light of the serious harms that weigh on the other side, at least when social deprivation is concerned.

For another thing, it is plausible that others will be required to share these costs with you, at least when doing so would otherwise be supererogatory. Consider:

> *Well*: Victim is starving at the bottom of a well. Annie and Betty can each pull her up alone, but if they do so they will break their backs. If they pull together, they will be able to save at the cost of being bed-bound for a few days.

Let us stipulate that breaking one's back to save another constitutes a supererogatory cost. Neither Annie nor Betty is therefore required to pull up Victim on their own.

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However, they can share the total burden, and render the cost they each bear a reasonable one. It is intuitive that they are required to cooperate in this way, assuming neither was willing to bear the supererogatory cost. This is because their respective options are: (a) leave Victim to die or (b) save Victim at the cost of being in bed for a few days. Assuming that a few days in bed is a reasonable cost, they are required to bear it by the lights of the duty of rescue. Indeed, they would be so required if these were the options they faced in a rendition of the case where they were alone. Therefore, agents are required to share costs when doing so is reasonable and necessary, for the same reason they are required to bear costs alone when doing so is reasonable and necessary to prevent serious harm.

These thoughts apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the deceptive association case. Sometimes, deceiving will be supererogatory, either at the start or at some point later. In these cases, others will be required to share the burden with you, in order to bring costs down to a reasonable level. This makes it more likely that costs can be reasonable for each *and* efficacious. One upshot here is that it is likely more plausible that *groups* of friends, family members, or co-workers, say, have collective obligations to deceive the socially needy, and include them in their shared activities in order to give them a sense of belonging, than individuals do. (This does not mean individual duties are *im*plausible.)

One more thing is that empirical studies have shown that spending time with people repeatedly, informally, and centred around a common project or interest often leads to the formation of decent social bonds.[72] One important implication of this research for the present point is that, so long as one chooses to interact in the right way, the net-costs of interacting with someone – even if one was not disposed to be friendly towards them at the start – are likely to decline over time. This gives us evidence that the costs of deception will likely diminish as our reasons for associating become more compatible with our own self-interest. This can be true even if one does not actually become the other's friend, and the interaction is not an overall benefit to one's life: the margin of cost will simply decrease.

So, all in all, while the challenge from the cost to duty-bearers is a powerful and illuminating one, it does not point to any unresolvable issue for the account. We must look to the best normative theory for some answers on demandingness, but we have good reason to think such duties will not need to be highly demanding to be efficacious in any case.

One final thought: what might the costs be to society if intimate deception of this kind was normalised as a moral requirement? If most people agree with the account, and act accordingly, deception may become more frequent, less frowned upon, and more a part of intimate life than it already is. This will plausibly have an impact on one's motivations and perspective on social life. Would this be for the best? This is a difficult question to answer, but it may be an important one: perhaps *this* change to our way of life would be too much, collectively, to bear. Given this potential for social degradation and suspicion, perhaps any duty to deceptively associate must always be seen as a regrettable thing, in order to guard other spheres of value from its wider effects. I leave this troubling and complicated thought here, and merely reiterate that the moral case in favour of deceptive association is powerful, and we must at some point come to fully grapple with what it might mean.

9. Conclusion

The ostensible unfeasibility of forming non-defective relationships out of a sense of duty poses a serious challenge to social rights. Doxastic associative duties to cause another to

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believe they enjoy non-defective relationships present a potential functional solution to this problem, but they raise difficult ethical questions. Promisingly, these questions can be answered: deceptively causing another to hold false beliefs about their social reality is not only permissible but morally required when it is a necessary, proportionate, and effective means of satisfying a target's social needs.

As a result, we should not see the necessity of deception to effective, dutiful intimacy as an insurmountable problem for social rights. On the contrary, it helps demarcate the most plausible scope of social rights, and should give us confidence in their feasibility as a class.

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NOTES

1 Telfer, "Friendship"; Thomas, "Friendship"; Thomas, "Character."
2 Liao, *Right*; Valentini, "What's Wrong with Being Lonely?"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Brownlee *et al.*, *Being Social*.
3 I thank an associate editor and an anonymous reviewer of this journal for suggesting this clarification.
4 Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*.
5 Liao, *Right*; Gheaus, "Love and Justice"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Brownlee *et al.*, *Being Social*.
6 Williams, *Moral Luck*.
7 Baumeister and Leary, "Need"; Cacioppo, "Loneliness"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Orben *et al.*, "Effects"; Coyle and Dugan, "Social Isolation."
8 I say often because it might be that individuals form false beliefs about your relationship with them by themselves and, therefore, avoid the harms of perceived social deprivation in that way. I think such cases will be quite rare.
9 Thick social rights are rights that aim at providing affective social labour to the rights-holder, as opposed to thin social rights, which aim only at providing functional social labour. Richards, "Feasibility."
10 Liao, "Right"; Cowden, "What's Love Got to Do with It?"; Gheaus, "Love and Justice."
11 Brake, *Minimizing Marriage*; Brownlee, "Human Right"; Brake, "Fair Care."
12 Liao, "Right"; Estlund, "Utopophobia"; Richards, "Feasibility."
13 Liao, "Right"; Cowden, "What's Love Got to Do with It?"; Gheaus, "Love and Justice"; Richards, "Feasibility."
14 I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.
15 Cordelli, "Distributive Justice"; Cordelli, "Justice as Fairness."
16 I thank an anonymous reviewer for questioning why such cases were excluded.
17 Brownlee, "On the Right"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Brownlee *et al.*, *Being Social*.
18 Brownlee, *Being Sure*.
19 Cordelli, "Distributive Justice"; Cordelli, "Justice as Fairness."
20 Richards, "Feasibility."

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21 Cordelli, "Justice as Fairness"; Valentini, "What's Wrong with Being Lonely?"
22 Brownlee, "Freedom of Association"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Brownlee *et al*., *Being Social*.
23 That is, I merely make a commitment to adopt the best view all things considered.
24 Gilabert and Lawford-Smith, "Political Feasibility"; Gilabert, *Human Dignity*.
25 Estlund, "Utopophobia"; Stemplowska, "Feasibility: Individual and Collective"; Stemplowska, "Incentives Account."
26 Kant, *Metaphysics*; Gheaus, "Love and Justice."
27 Cowden, "What's Love Got to Do with It?"
28 Eames *et al*., "Social Deprivation"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*; Orben *et al*., "Effects"; Coyle and Dugan, "Social Isolation."
29 Chugani *et al*., "Local Brain Functional Activity"; Whitebread, "Free Play"; Orben *et al*., "Effects."
30 Baumeister and Leary, "Need"; Brownlee, "Human Right"; Orben *et al*., "Effects"; Coyle and Dugan, "Social Isolation."
31 Raz, *Morality of Freedom*; Rawls, *Theory of Justice*.
32 Rawls, *Political Liberalism*; Rawls, *Theory of Justice*; Cordelli, "Justice as Fairness."
33 Baumeister and Leary, "Need"; Brownlee, "Human Right"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*.
34 Liao, "Right"; Liao, *Right*.
35 Singer, "Famine"; Kamm, "Distance"; Miller, "Nature"; Frowe, "Limited Use View."
36 Nozick, *Anarchy*; Mill, *On Liberty*; Soon, "Sorting."
37 Brownlee, "Freedom of Association."
38 McMahan, *Killing in War*; Tadros, *Ends of Harm*; Quong, "Liability"; Frowe, *Defensive Killing*.
39 Korsgaard, "Right to Lie."
40 Ibid.; Shiffrin, *Speech Matters*; Fabre, *Spying*.
41 Shiffrin, *Speech Matters*.
42 Ibid.; Fabre, *Spying*.
43 Thompson, *Realm of Rights*.
44 Scanlon, *What We Owe*; Tadros, *Ends of Harm*.
45 Tadros, "Appropriate Normative Powers"; Tadros, "Beyond the Scope."
46 Parfit, *On What Matters*, vol. 1.
47 McMahan, *Killing in War*.
48 I include both because there are costs relevant to both being deceived *and* deceiving.
49 Brownlee, "On the Right."
50 Parry, "Defensive Harm."
51 Clark, "Refusing Protection."
52 Tadros, "Consent to Sex."
53 I thank Johann Go for this case.
54 I thank Zosia Stemplowska and an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.
55 I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting I engage with these kinds of case.
56 I thank Victor Tadros for giving me a case like this in a quite different context.
57 Scheffler, *Rejection*; Nagel, *View*.
58 Kamm, *Intricate Ethics*.
59 I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing up doing and allowing, and giving me this idea.
60 Dworkin, "What Is Equality?"; Parr and Williams, "Fair Insurance."
61 Cowden, "What's Love Got to Do with It?"; Gheaus, "Love and Justice."
62 Liao, "Right"; Liao, *Right*.
63 Brownlee, "On the Right"; Brownlee, *Being Sure*.
64 Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*; Parfit, *On What Matters*.
65 Nozick, *Anarchy*.
66 I thank an associate editor of this journal for pressing this point.
67 Thanks to Rob Cheah for his doubts on my view which produced this case.
68 Lin, "Pleasure."
69 Nozick, *Anarchy*; Kant, *Metaphysics*.
70 Singer, "Famine"; Kamm, *Intricate Ethics*; Tadros, *To Do*; Frowe, "Limited Use View."
71 I thank a reviewer for pressing this sort of objection.
72 Small, *Unanticipated Gains*; Cordelli, "Distributive Justice."

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