

Part 1

My thesis is: if the collective decisions of a parent fails to contribute more toward a child's good welfare than bad welfare, then it was morally wrong for that parent to have that child. If the collective decisions of a parent contribute more toward a child's good welfare than bad welfare, then it was morally permissible for that parent to have that child. I want to point out that I am saying that contributing equal to a child's good welfare and bad welfare is also morally wrong since the parent fails to contribute more toward the child's good welfare. **It wasn't clear when I first read this whether you meant that the wrongness of having a parent *now* depended on what happens in the next 50 years (reading further, it seems that that is your view). A bit more clarification/explanation here would have been helpful.**

I have two main arguments for my thesis. My first argument states: parents have the duty to contribute more positively to a child's life than negatively. I say this because failing to do so would be harming that child. Harming people is generally considered morally wrong, especially in a case where you are harming a person who is weak and unable to defend themselves. In addition, I would believe that people generally agree that if you cause someone to be in need you have a duty to help that person. For example, if you are driving someone else's car and total it, then you have a duty to help that person get a new car. This is very similar to parenting because the child does not give the parent any consent to have them, so as a result the parent is putting the child in this vulnerable position. Children are very dependent on their parents because they are unable to take care of themselves. Therefore, parents have a special obligation to do right by their children by helping them more than they harm them. As a result, this means that it is wrong for a parent to contribute equally to a child's good and bad welfare because the parent would be failing to fulfill their obligation as a parent. This is well argued.

My second argument is a response to the claim in my thesis that you can only know if having a child is morally permissible after you have had the child. This claim might shock you because it seems counterintuitive that decisions you make in the future affect the permissibility of decisions you make in the present. In addition, this claim makes it difficult for parents to know how to decide whether or not they should have a child. To be clear, I am saying that parents should undergo reasonable self and situational evaluation before deciding to have a child. However, though in most cases this is a good thing to do, even the most comprehensive evaluation does not guarantee the permissibility of having that child. Here is why. As you may assume, predicting whether you are going to be a good or bad parent cannot always be accurate. This is because often times people change throughout their lives and also as a result of having a child. For example, Tod had parents that were emotionally and physically abusive and as a result suffers from low self-esteem and self-worth. This has led him to believe that he would be a terrible parent because his parents are the only example he has to go off of. Therefore, he does not want to become a parent. However, he becomes a parent by accident. Before the child is born, he decides to do a lot of research and go to counselors to try to learn how to be a good parent. Once his child is born, Tod tries very hard to implement what he has learned. Over time he realizes that he is actually an excellent parent. Tod even uses his own childhood experience to know what not to do in parenting his child. This example is important because it illustrates that people who foresee their parenting competency to be one way may be wrong. I assume that you could also imagine a case where a parent believes that he or she will be a great parent but actually ends up being a bad parent. This could be a result of them having a construed idea about what it takes to be a good parent or circumstances that occur after they have their child causes them to not be able to make the decisions necessary to give their child a good life. Although my

logic has its flaws, these examples show that basing the moral permissibility of having a child purely on the prediction of how good of a parent you believe you will be is simply nonsensical. Therefore, I contend that a parent can only know for sure whether it was morally permissible to have their child after they already had it **This is a very interesting idea. I suspect that people who disagree with you would say that people are only obligated to do the best they can; so they make the best prediction they can, and go with that.**

Understandably, there are some obvious objections to my thesis. One such objection is that it is morally permissible for a parent who causes their child to have a bad welfare to have that child as long as they cause society or other people more benefit than harm. For example, suppose a bright young girl named Mia was physically and emotionally abused by her parents as a child. As a result, both parents contribute more toward her bad well-being than her good well-being. However, despite the trauma incurred by her parents, she found a way to make it on her own and ends up curing cancer. As a result, the good she causes by curing cancer outweighs the bad of her parents abusing her. In this case, it seems intuitive that Mia should have been born. I agree. However, saying I believe Mia should have been born is different than saying I believe that it was morally permissible for Mia's parents to have her. This is because I believe parents have the special obligation to help their child more than they harm them. Therefore, I am saying that sometimes things that were morally wrong should have been done anyways. However, that does not change the fact that it was morally wrong. **So, what does it mean to say she "should have been born?" This is not clear to me. It would be helpful to provide other examples of things that should happen but are still wrong.**

Another strong objection to my thesis is that people may argue that it should be morally permissible for a parent to have a child as long as the parent tries to give their child a good welfare, even if what the parent thinks is going to give their child a net good welfare is actually causing their child to have a net negative welfare. This puts into question whether a person's good intention trumps their ability to make good decisions for their children. Surely it is reasonable to assume that some parents will make decisions that they intend to have positive consequences, but in reality will have the opposite effect. In fact, this is very common. For example, a parent may force their child to become a doctor because they believe that in the end it will be good for them. However, in reality this decision causes the child a lot of bad welfare so much so that this one decision causes the parent to contribute more to the child's bad welfare than good welfare. Part of being a good parent is understanding the specific needs of your child. I know this because if this was not the case, then there would be a step by step guide on how to be a good parent. However, no such thing exists. In addition, my thesis does leaves room for parents to make mistakes. In fact, if just under half of a parent's decisions are mistakes it could still be permissible for that parent to have that child. This means that the parent would have to be fairly ignorant to not recognize that their decisions are contributing to their child's bad welfare to that extent. In that case, the parent does not have the right skill set it takes to be a good parent and therefore it is morally wrong for that parent to have that child. **Good response to this objection.**

A classmate of mine brought an additional objection to my attention. It is a case where an excellent parent in every way accidentally gets into a car crash that paralyzes their child, which causes them to have an overall bad welfare for the rest of their lives. This objection has a strong argument. However, my thesis does not say that if the child has an overall bad welfare due to causes not pertaining to parenting that it was necessarily morally wrong for that parent to have that child. As a result, this case does not give us enough information to decide whether it was

morally permissible for that parent to have that child. In order to decide if it was permissible or not, we would have to know about all the other the decisions that this parent made for their child. Most likely, if they are an excellent parent the decisions they make for their child prior to the accident and even after the accident will most likely contribute more positively toward their well-being. As a result, it is still possible that it was morally permissible for this parent to have their child as long as their other actions make up for the car crash and other possible wrongdoings. However, in the case where after the accident the parent gives up and is not quite the excellent parent that he or she originally was and as a result contributed more to their child's bad well-being then it would be morally wrong for that parent to have that child. **Good objection to discuss, and very sensible response.**

Also, another objection to my thesis is what if a child is unaware that their parent is contributing more toward their good welfare and believes that their parent is contributing more toward their bad well-being. This case seems very possible because often children blame their parents for things that are going wrong in their lives even though they have pretty good parents. However, this objection does not disprove my thesis. This is because my thesis is not concerned about whether the child is aware of the good or bad welfare that their parent is giving them. My thesis is purely concerned with the decisions of the parent, not the opinion of the child.

An additional objection to my thesis is that if what contributes to a child's good well-being is morally wrong, is it still morally permissible to have that child? For example, what if there was a kid named Bob who was a psychopath and took pleasure in torturing orphaned little kittens. Frankie, Bob's parent, decides to give Bob orphaned kittens to torture because he knows that this will contribute to Bob's well-being. In addition, Frankie contributes positively to the other aspects of Bob's life making it morally permissible for Frankie to have had Bob. This may seem counterintuitive because I would assume that most people believe that torturing orphaned kittens is not morally permissible. However, I argue that Frankie giving Bob the orphaned kittens to torture is a separate issue of permissibility that has nothing to do with the permissibility of whether Frankie should have had Bob. This is because it is only necessary for Frankie to give animals to Bob to torture under very specific circumstances. Bob would have to take so much pleasure in torturing orphaned kittens that even if Frankie took every other measure possible to provide Bob with a net positive welfare it could not be achieved unless Frankie gave Bob the orphaned kittens. This is highly unlikely, however, in the unimaginable scenario where this is the case then Frankie would have the duty to give Bob orphaned kittens to torture because Frankie has the special obligation as Bob's parent to cause him to have a net positive welfare.

This does a very good job of arguing for a surprising thesis. It also brings up some great objections, and makes reasonable, well supported responses to them. Good job!

Part 2

Chandler and Sally are the parents of Maddy. Chandler is a terrible father. He intentionally tries to make Maddy's life miserable. Sally is a good mother and tries to give her love and attention. Sally tries to take Maddy away from Chandler but he threatens to kill Sally if she does. No matter how much Sally tries she can't get Maddy away from Chandler or make up for the bad welfare that Chandler contributes to Maddy's life. As a result of Chandler's parenting, Maddy wants to kill herself. Even though Sally tries to convince Maddy not to, she does anyways. As a result, even though the actions of just Sally has caused Maddy to have a net positive welfare, it was morally wrong for Sally to have Maddy. **It's not clear how strong of an objection this is, because the details are murky. To what extent could Sally have predicted**

this would happen? What precisely does she do to try to help? These details are important to assessing how plausible the objection is (how plausible it is that Sally does something wrong). So you need include those examples.

Part 3

I do believe that it was morally wrong for Sally to have Maddy. However, where my thesis does not agree with this example is that the actions of Sally did not contribute to Maddy's net positive welfare. This is because the decisions a parent makes toward a child's well-being includes one's parenting partner. Although my thesis looks at the permissibility of each parent independently, who a parent chooses to raise their child with is a big contributor to a child's welfare. Therefore, even though Sally tried all she could to get Maddy away from Chandler she still made the decision to have her child with him. As a result, she is responsible for parts of the bad welfare that Chandler contributed to Maddy's life. Consequently, Sally did not contribute positively towards Maddy's welfare.

This is a very reasonable response, but since it is so straightforward, it suggests that Part 2 is not a very strong objection. After all, the person making the objection in Part 2 could easily have noticed that Sally's actions include her choice of a partner, and so could have anticipated what you would say about this case. Since the weakness of Part 2 limits how strong of a grade you can get on Part 3, this lowered your grade on Part 3.