“The Weight of Expectations”

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Abstract

Our parents, more so than our friends or close partners, have a special ability to hurt us. As Waverly notes in *The Joy Luck Club*, our mothers know “how to hit a nerve. And the pain [we] feel is worse than any other kind of misery.” The feeling of being burdened by our parents’ beliefs and expectations is a familiar feeling. But how exactly do the expectations our parents place upon us wrong us? In this paper I attempt to make sense of this feeling of being wronged by exploring the ways in which expectations can reflect a conflict of values, constrain one’s freedoms and infringe upon our agency, and how expectations can result in a kind of ontological denial. My hope is that reflecting on one of our most important relationships we can better understand how our relationships shape our attitudinal and doxastic obligations to one another more generally.