The Best Available Parent Revisited

In previous work I have defended The Best Available Parent (BAP) view about who has the moral right to parent a child, and, indirectly, about justified allocation of custody. The view says that the moral right to parent is held by the person, or persons, who would make the best parent for that child of all those who express a commitment to parent the child, compatible with respecting general principles and aims of justice. Integral to the child-centred view that generates BAP is a distinction between exercising authority, or control, over the child, and associating with the child in caring relationships. In this paper I re-state the view and elaborate on it, making it clear that the right to parent thus conceived is a liberty right; I reiterate the case for BAP, and tease out some practical implications. In doing these things I also respond to some of my critics.