Friendship; the Foundation of Moral Sense

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Introduction

We are addicted to right and wrong. Our addiction leads to disagreement. We can be found disagreeing over moral questions around our dining room tables, between podiums in a legislative hall, across the aisle between desks in a secondary school classroom.[1] Disagreeing is not a new phenomenon; disagreeing is as old as the conversation, and is a subject about which philosophers, new and old, have failed to resolve.[2] Query whether our disagreements are a function of moral ideas, or whether they are a function of the people we encounter and with whom we by default become engaged with their diverse histories and cultural disagreements. Therefore, let's consider the extent to which disagreements stem from each individual's moral sense, and the extent to which our moral sensibilities connect us with others?

The subject of this thesis will address the connection between friendships and an individual's moral sense. Moral issues can both make or break friendships, and in this sense like mindedness, is a determining factor of friendships. Moral mistakes can also break up friendships, and moral disagreements can cause friendships to dissolve. The activities undertaken to maintain a friendship and the activities pursuant to moral sensibilities intersect one another. What I would like to consider is whether these intersections amount to something more philosophically significant than general social customs, such that they involve themselves with personal identity and morality in a more fundamental manner.

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[1] When it comes to all 'moral' and 'ethical' discussions, it is my opinion that the words 'moral,' and 'ethical' become confused. In this work I will use the word 'ethical' to refer to theories of right and wrong. In these cases, "ethics" refer to a theoretical system. 'Moral' will be understood in this work as referring to the particular, and personal actions, justifications, and evaluations. Intuitively, morality is more person centered whereas ethics are more system centered.

[2] Only to the extent that we decide disagreement presents a problematic dilemma (certainly disagreement that rises to the level of violence and war should be considered problematic) would we consider its continued existence a failure of philosophers to resolve. Otherwise, disagreement and the community's tolerance for disagreement, arguably maintains the moral integrity of a community (i.e., consider communities in which free speech is suppressed and therefore moral questions are resolved by force or threat of force).

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Relationships, a broad category which includes friendships, are the vessel, or conduit by which moral questions are explored because relationships are the site of morally significant interactions. Among these morally significant interactions are transactions, acceptances, refusals, sacrifices, etc. For example, consider the moral responsibilities and expectations involved in the relationship between two merchants, or that of a soldier and his commanding officer, or even a son and his mother. The expectations involved in each relationship are particular, and have situational differences. The moral expectations seem to occupy different domains in terms of intimacy within the relationship, as well as the activities performed by those in the relationship. Our question is how this affects morality writ large, and 'how' moral sensibilities are derived from certain kinds of relationships.

That being said, the essence, or lack thereof, of unifying particular moral obligations into a general, universal, higher order form of right and wrong are beyond the focus of this thesis. Instead, this thesis will focus upon the character of 'friendship,' how the character of true friendships are distinct from general relations, and the significance of this difference for the formation of moral sense/sensibility. Different relationships occupy different domains in our lives, but my contention is that friendship takes precedence over all other domains.

Much of friendship's precedence will be derived from the exceptional expectations true friends expect from one another, that are different from more general rules of etiquette within the wider social sphere (polis).

In the case of all relationships, which include friendships, we can understand them in terms of role, and the expectations of those in particular social roles. As such, lovers, spouses, colleagues, teammates and even rivals, all have expectations of their counterparts that structure and maintain the relationship. The same can also be attributed to roles in schemes of production such as producers, consumers, and owners. Yet, there are qualitative differences between intimate

friendships, and productive, 'coincidental' relations.

Thus, amongst these relationships, some are apt to be considered friendships, and more importantly "complete" or "unconditional" friendships.[3] What distinguishes them from all other relationships are their capacity to inspire trans-personal considerations where one can both genuinely act on another's behalf, and understand oneself and know what one ought to do via the true friend's interaction. Some call this phenomena intimacy, or selflessness; yet irrespective of what we call it, it is particular to friendships. Whatever we call this phenomena, or however we describe it, it maintains exceptional characteristics. Perspicacity, and the possibility for friends to understand us better than we understand ourselves is one of these exceptional characteristics.

The distinction between relationships and friendships is a matter of intimacy. Yet, this begs the question of how 'true friendship,' as a kind of relationship, ought to be analyzed. Philosophically, friendship must possess trans-historical features. Trans-historical features are features of an object that do not change with the times, or cultures.

For example, regularly texting one another, for some of us, is a condition of friendship today. It is a feature of what Aristotle might consider "sharing life together." However, this condition of friendship is not trans-historical. It depends upon technological and cultural factors. What we want to understand are the features of friendships that apply in all historical contexts so that we can speak intelligently about 'friendship' writ large, and deduce friendship's significance in all of human life.

Trans-historical features are internal to why a certain object is considered in a class of objects. For our purposes, 'friendship' is the class of objects we are concerned with, and particular friendships are the particular objects we shall scrutinize. If no part of a friendship possesses trans-

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[3] Aristotle's lexicon uses the term "coincidental" friends to describe what I will call at certain points general social relations. "Complete" friends embody the kind of relationships I take to be philosophically significant.

historical consistency, then friendship will fail to possess the conceptual stability to determine and influence moral sensibilities. This deduction holds since objects by the same name, must have certain features the same in reality, for them to possess the same philosophical significance.

Thus, explaining the importance of friendships' conceptual consistency, and explaining the stable, and objective features of friendship are among the aims of this essay. By doing so I hope to resolve that friendships are the interactive background for particular moral foregrounds which emerge in different individuals, in different cultural settings, at different times in history, but do so in the same manner, and contribute the same interactive background in all contexts, and consist of something distinctly human.

In order to achieve this, three chapters will proceed as follows:

Chapter I "Virtue and Community"- presents Aristotle's formulation of virtue theory and characterizes all of its features within an essentially social schemata. This chapter will also articulate why this discussion is best held in terms of virtue theory because virtue theory best reflects how we engage with ourselves, others and one's rightness or wrongness. Virtue theory will also be discussed as it accounts for the dynamism that pertains to the morally salient roles, and relations people occupy. It will also consider how the level of intimacy distinguishes friendships from general relationships.

Chapter II "Defining Friendship"- presents Aristotle's characterization of friendship. It will deal in the activities that sustain different kinds of friendship as well as the kinds of objects that inspire friendship in the first place. This chapter also shows how the components of complete friendship are morally salient, and how these components can either inhibit or strengthen relations between individuals. It also presents friendship as the fundamental component of community. Thus, insofar as morality intersects with the moral community, it essentially intersects friendship as friendship is its essence.

Chapter III- The Genealogical Problem- presents a historical/absurdist objection to virtue theory's ethical framework and the roles that constitute this framework. The possibility that the relational features within virtue theory obfuscate any and all sense of fundamentality towards ethical predicates will be investigated. Moreover, the negative features of social relations, including friendships will be spelled out in terms of how friendships can be said to limit someone from self-actualization. However, I will then weigh this moral problem against the need for friendship in an individual's quest for personal self-knowledge, as well as the role self-knowledge plays in personal growth.

Chapter I

Virtue and Community

In this chapter, I present Aristotle's formulation of virtue theory as a basic ethical framework which can be configured with friendship. By doing so, I will weld together ethics under the precondition of moral communities, taking what might be considered a humanist approach. Thus, I shall begin by defining virtue, and virtuous character's constitutive parts (particular virtues). I will then present these component parts in terms of how they are grounded within moral communities, while considering the historical background and essential features of

'happiness' or 'the good,' which standardize an ethical system.

1.1- Why Virtue Theory

At the outset of this discussion it is important to acknowledge that by setting up this presentation in terms of virtue theory and its connection to moral communities, we are looking past both utilitarian, and Neo-Kantian/deontological understandings of the ethical category.[4] My reason for making this choice is that these approaches overemphasize universality, and ignore many background considerations that are involved with morality in practice. Impartiality, as it pertains to nailing down what one ought to do in a morally significant situation, is rare if not altogether impossible insofar as we involve ourselves with others' personality as particular individuals with unique proclivities. These approaches proceed by presuming provisos and categorical imperatives, and are not concerned with the manner in which people actually make moral choices.

When people make moral decisions they are as concerned with people as they are with principles, and insofar as they are concerned with people they are concerned with virtues, roles, and the larger moral community. Moreover, what constrains these choices are what determines a flourishing human life, and flourishing human/moral community. The possibility for people and groups of people to flourish maintain meta-ethical primacy.[5]

[4] For more on Utilitarianism and Deontological ethical frameworks see:
 Julia Driver, "The History of Utilitarianism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, September 22, 2014, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/.

And. Larry Alexander and Michael Moore, "Deontological Ethics," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, October 30, 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-deontological/.). *Each of these strategies are action centered as opposed to person centered.*
[5] Christine McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1999) 10-15.

Some may say that this amounts to a cultural, dramaturgical game[6], yet we are concerned with morality's sites, or the settings within which moral judgements, thoughts, and actions occur and not deconstructing morality's essence to an abstract, in-actual essence. We ought to consider the consciousness experienced when someone is thinking in a manner that can be considered 'moral.' This consciousness includes the features people consider such as how their actions affect others, what others will think of their actions, who or what they trust, and to whom they offer justifications, as well as the background contexts.

Those events we experience which force us to examine morality in our lives are most pertinent when they affect those to whom we are socially tied. Admittedly, it is difficult to delineate these two categories of events. Yet, there is a distinct quality when what ails or harms another is someone to whom we are closely associated. The event has a distinct phenomenology via the commitments we share with those suffering harm.

Moreover, when one personally suffers harm those persons who are close to us offer, or are expected to offer, assistance. The same cannot be said for general bystanders. A friend's pity differs from a bystander's pity. We take a friend's pity more seriously. If it is the case that moral expectations, and duties are different in terms of relation (i.e., how intimate we are with someone governs our moral duties towards them) then relationality involves moral primacy. Beyond our ability to express pity to our friends, we can understand the relational substance of pity, or empathy through inter-familial interactions. This is evidenced by the care and empathy a parent exhibits for its child as well as the empathy siblings express for each other. Prima facie, people within these inter-familial relationships are more emotionally invested in one another than general bystanders.

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[6] "Dramaturgical," herein refers to a sociological account that is more concerned with the background contexts, than the behaviors of individuals when determining the meaning of an individual's actions. For more see: Janek Szatkowski, *A Theory of Dramaturgy* (London: Routledge, 2019) 6-25.

In Chapter III, I will address the problems concerning the essence of right and wrong under this ethical approach, and reinforce why this approach should be the mechanism by which we philosophically understand morality. Yet, it forces ethical thought to teeter very close to subjectivism.

For this reason, examples of virtuous activity, and virtuous individuals cannot be conceived as objective, universal paradigms because the categories of virtue pertain primarily to the individual's relational features. The definition of 'virtuous activity' is situated by the demands of individuals within communities, and thereby situational and circumstantial. Once standardized and solidified, they become standards of judgment.[7] Intuitively, we expect different things from different people based upon who they are and the roles they occupy within a community. As such, we expect baristas to be good at brewing coffee, math teachers to be good at algebra, and accountants to understand money. These judgments of course can be justified in cases of evaluating someone's expectation compared to their abilities, or unjustified when discriminatory factors such as race, gender, or sexuality are primarily determinative. But the judgments are fundamentally all the same, in their necessary occurrence, and the background *explanantia* (means of explanation).[8] Roles provide a basis for moral judgment. The basis of judgment is subject to be

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[7] For more on justifying the ethical predicates, or this background normative approach, see 1. Jeremy Evans and Michael Smith, "Toward a Role Ethical Theory of Right Action," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 21, no. 3 (2018): 599–614, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-018-9903-9.

[8] If some still remain unconvinced that we should consider the content of ethical predicates in relational terms, let's evaluate the viewpoint in terms of Marxist historical materialism. For example, let's consider a community of 3 people.
1. Let's say that chopping down trees is a necessary task in order for the members of this community to create shelter, and creating shelter is necessary for them to survive.
2. Suppose that Person A is able to chop down 3 trees an hour whereas Person B is only able to chop down 2 trees an hour, also lets add the proposition that there are enough tasks such that the community can only afford for one person to spend their time chopping down trees.
3. In this case it is most efficient for Person A to spend his time chopping down trees, while Person B should complete a different task.
4. The case would be different if there were a third member of the community. Call this Person C.
5. Suppose Person C can chop down 4 trees an hour. In this case it is more economical for Abby to spend time cutting down trees, while Person A and B should spend time doing something else (assuming that the amount of necessary work increases proportionally to the number of members in the community).

evaluated in terms of appropriateness, but by evaluating appropriateness we do not obfuscate the fact that a judgment occurs.

Thus, the determination of someone's roles is not an objective practice. People occupy different roles in each other's lives. For example, the same person who is a barista may also be a mother, and when it comes to her child, the child has expectations of her that are particular to the child's perspective. Thus, all people have general social roles like occupations, group memberships, etc., and also interpersonal roles like mother/father, brother/sister, spouse, friend, etc.[9] A division between general social roles and interpersonal roles exists in terms of the intimacies intrinsic to the relation. The pertinence writ large is the function interpersonal roles versus. social roles play in self-knowledge, identity, and the internal perception of personal growth.

More will be said about this later on.

1.2- Role and Community

What is determinative of an individual's relation within the moral community are his personal abilities, and the relationship of these abilities to the moral community. See fn. 8 to illuminate this point. Naturalistic assertions do not sufficiently determine someone's role. The concept of naturalism suggests that in lieu of an individual's 'natures,' inalienable features, or 'natural abilities,' they ought/must fulfill certain roles within the moral community.

Even if the results sometimes fit into what is most 'efficient,' the roles people occupy that are a function of naturalism, pure and simple, do not provide sufficient explanation for the roles people ought to occupy in the social sphere. Relationality is the ground itself. Relationality

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6. Thus, 'role' under historical materialism would define the tree cutter role as relative to the background community- which is determined by the required work and who is in the community.

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defines the roles people occupy and why they occupy those roles. The roles people best occupy are a matter of how they relate to the skills, aptitudes, and abilities of others, as well as the background needs within the moral community. Virtue is in many ways a craft, or technē. The cultural background determines individuals' roles as well as an individual's 'essences,' abilities and capacities.

While determining interpersonal roles, the same sort of evaluations apply to determine who fulfills what role within the community. However, these determinations are governed more by situation and circumstance as opposed to mutual essences. For example, the role of being a brother is outside of said individual's control. It is a function of the individual's family organization, and the surrounding cultural expectations. Being a friend is also very similar insofar as no one has complete control over whom they meet, and with whom they desire to share their lives. Yet, the maintenance of these relations is within the individual's control. For example, a mother or father has the agency to decide to act as a parent (offering guidance, nurturing, love, attention, etc.) or not.

Nevertheless, for both kinds of roles, static 'natural' frameworks fail to fully explain the roles an individual fulfills within the community. For example, consider the situation where someone believes that a man is a more qualified candidate for an engineering position simply based upon his sex. The virtue of ingenuity or engineering ability would be mis-evaluated in certain cases since the mode of judgment is outside the activities of the virtue in itself. Thus, when it comes to the determination of role (selection, judgment, expectation), it both depends upon the background social context, as well as the nature of how individuals in a community evaluate skills. At times, the nature of this evaluation can extend beyond the features internal to the craft, skill, or aptitude being evaluated.

Thus, whereas virtue is both the thinking and habituation involved in a particular craft,

the identification of virtue is subject to communal relationality. This is true for both instrumental goods (such as carpentry) as it is for 'happiness,' an intrinsic good. According to Aristotle:

Virtue, then, is twofold, of thought and of character. [NE II.1.1104a].

When it comes to thought, there is both the thought of the one acting virtuously, and the thought of those in the background evaluating if the one is acting virtuously. For example, when someone attempts to act generously by helping an older woman cross a busy intersection, there is the thought of the person helping the older woman, the thought of the older woman, and the thought of bystanders. The thought 'surrounding' virtue includes all of these thoughts. The character, however, only involves the individual attempting to act virtuously, and this is a function of that person's intentions.

In lieu of this discussion, let's consider particular virtues in context; seeing how the thought and character that constitutes virtue behaves in context.

1.3 - Virtue and Context

Notions of virtue include courageousness, generosity, justice, temperance, practical wisdom, etc. Once again, these virtues are descriptives for activities which maintain a similar form in different situations although performed by different individuals. As such, the activities congruent to particular virtues are different for an attorney as compared to a soldier, while the same may also be true for a parent compared to a grandparent. Yet, all of these virtues consist of a medial (middle) condition. They share a trans-historical character. According to Aristotle:

Virtue then is a deliberately choosing state, which is in a medial condition in relation to us, one defined by a reason and the one by which a practically-wise person would define it [NE II.6.1107a].

Justice, for example, is a balance between mercifulness and equity. Generosity is a balance between possessiveness and charitability. The activities required to achieve balance are particular for the individual and for their governing role(s). 'The good' at which these virtues aim

is a kind of personal balance or eudaimonia (a state of human flourishing). Yet, all of these virtues, as ethical qualifiers, need context to achieve actuality. Goodness is a more fundamental functive, or functional part of this meta-ethical system.

So, what is the good, and why is it important to this ethical picture? Goodness is what substantiates rational, ethical motivations. It proceeds from the fact that everyone wants something. From this 'desiring' activity, we can derive the concept of goodness. Generally, the sense in which something is good or bad, or right or wrong is a function of goodness. Whether or not ethicists are considering virtues, principles, or actions this sense seems to hold.

Ethicist Richard Kraut strengthens the centrality of 'goodness' within ethical discussions when he writes that "no realm of practical reasons floats free from what is good and bad for someone and competes with them. "[10]

In the fourth chapter of Kraut's book, *What is Good and Why,* he unifies both ancient and contemporary ethical frameworks under "The Sovereignty of Good." Kraut's claim is both pertinent in a meta-ethical and historical sense.

Historically, Kraut's thesis verifies the need for 'goodness' in order to substantiate trans-historical ground. This thesis means that in order for ethical claims, or moral judgements to remain consistent, then the context within which 'goodness' is considered must also be consistent. The application of ethical theories becomes first and foremost a factor of goodness; irrespectively of an ethical theory's conceptual organization. For example, a utilitarian (whose fundamental concern is maximizing goodness) must first determine what goodness is before asking whose goodness should be increased, protected or solidified.

Meta-ethically, Kraut's thesis forces us to consider conceptions of goodness in order to

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[10] Richard Kraut, *What Is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2009), 208.

operationalize an ethical approach. Thus, whether or not goodness is hedonistic (concerned with the maximization of pleasure), desire-satisfactionism (the fulfillment of desires) must be determined prior to the mechanics of an ethical approach. So, when it comes to hedonic-act utilitarianism, the theory of hedonism, and the conception of goodness in terms of pleasure precedes an examination of the mechanisms of utilitarianism.

Further, even in cases of deontology where remaining loyal to particular ethical principles is more important than consequentialist considerations, goodness is centre staged. Deontological principles such as respecting certain traditions, or cultural practices, even when these practices do not maximize goodness during the event, still aim at goodness, fundamentally, even when particular instances of acting in accord with a certain principle do not maximize goodness.

Kraut makes this argument when he considers the absurdity of players in a basketball game taking joy in making a shot with a spherical ball into a round hoop. In itself, the sense of this ethical value is not involved with goodness. However, this ignores the background historical and cultural practices that associate 'goodness' with multiple people working together towards a goal, or of two groups of people competing in a game.

These kinds of 'absurd ethical practices' function to create and maintain communities which are involved with 'goodness' as such. The same can be said about universal rules banning murder, sexual assault, etc., or even those requiring respect for the dead. *Ipso facto,* goodness is not pertinent. Yet, when we consider the background moral community that these deontological principles sustain, goodness is center stage.[11] The difference between how certain ethical theories engage 'goodness' is a function of whether they incorporate goodness more in theory, or in practice; accounting for the moments where doing good is counter-intuitive.

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[11] Richard Kraut, *What Is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2009), 200-212.

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This does not suggest that the 'content' of goodness must remain constant. In different productive, cultural, and economical situations, different tasks, virtues, and abilities are more or less important. For example, in a society that has invented the printing press, scribes and the ability to act as a scribe is obsolete. Therefore, the conceptual form of 'goodness' must be consistent, but not the contextual form. In different contexts, goodness could be evaluated as the highest degree of prosperity within the community, or evaluated based upon proximity to a cultural conception of the divine, equality, social stability or other communal virtues. Nevertheless, the nature of the good is still relational. Transcendental, national, cultural, and ideological commitments function to determine the manner in which different individuals define the good. Even within particular communities, different individuals define 'the good' differently. For some, good is a connection to a god, while for others it is physical pleasure and quality of life. A market of goods exists that individuals value and devalue inter and intra communally. Especially in modern liberal societies, a degree of reasonable pluralism is expected within our moral communities. Yet, within this there are both general moral expectations, and particular interpersonal expectations. The fact of goodness persists in all frameworks.

Thus, when it comes to the philosophical thought on this subject, plurality will not suffice. G.E. Moore, for example, argues that "'good' denotes something simple and indefinable."[12] When it comes to ethics, "good has a primarily non-descriptive, non-cognitive meaning."[13] Yet, good, at the same time, is used in a variably descriptive fashion, representing different features in different contexts. Simply, contextuality and conceptuality cannot be aligned. The word 'good' denotes too many variable contexts, while also comprising a fundamental philosophical consistency. They do not mean the same thing when it comes to 'good.' This is

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[12] John Leslie Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1983), 50.
[13] Ibid.

most evident when we consider social and personal contexts, or 'interpersonal' and 'social' good.

1.4- Sciences of 'The Good.'

Plato's *Republic* draws a compelling picture as he attempts to unify the social good with interpersonal good. Aristotle's *Politics* also tries to perform the same task. This focus is not surprising as the issue is approached via political and legal philosophy. However, in each case the mechanics, and methodologies, aspire to the same consistencies the thinkers use in their formulation of personal good. Personal and social good are analogous in each formulation.

As such, for Plato and Aristotle, these formulations aspire to a certain 'social balance.' Plato conceives of communal and personal balance in a theoretically analogous manner.

Psychological *Eudaimonia* (well-being) is a function of a three piece balance within the soul. The logistikon (reason), the thymoeides (spirit), and the epithymetikon (appetite) comprise these three pieces for Plato. When he conceives of the political community, Plato ascertains that all three of these parts should be governed by the logistikon (reason). Society, like the soul, should be like a charioteer directing two properly tamed horses. Within the community, Plato conceived three categories of individuals 1) merchants/money makers 2) soldiers and 3) governors/philosophers. Within this context, Plato argues in favor of philosopher kings.[14] Just as (reason) ought to govern the soul, the "friends of wisdom,"[15] or philosophers, ought to govern the society.

Aristotle's *Politics* addresses the question of organizing around and towards 'the good' in moral communities. Aristotle's eight books aim to describe the science of politics (polis). For Aristotle, political science is a kind of practical science that aims at the good of the city (polis) citizens, or the individuals within the polis. Aristotle stated:

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[14] For more on Plato's *Republic* see Brown, Eric, "Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition) Accessed May 23, 2023.

[15] Gilles Deleuze et al., *What Is Philosophy?* (London: Verso, 2015), 16.

It is clear that every community aims at some good, and the community which has the most authority of all and includes all the others aims highest, that is, at the good with the most authority. This is what is called the city-state or political community. [I.1.1252a1–7][16]

The structure of the city-state is built upon the roles people occupy to constitute this 'good.' Moreover, the communal and social good are in some sense, "the highest" for Aristotle. The same sort of claim can also be derived from Plato's *Republic.* Yet, Plato's rendering makes the social good out to be an amalgam of personal goods where social goodness and personal goodness work to align one another. Aristotle agrees with this contention, and elevates social goodness to a higher status. As the philosopher writes in Book I of the *Nichomachean Ethics*:

For even if the good is the same for an individual and for a city, that of a city is evidently a greater and, at any rate, a more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it should content us to acquire and preserve this for an individual alone, it is nobler and more divine to do so for a nation and city. [NE I.3.1095b]

Thus, the good of an individual is subordinate to the good of the city, or the good of the whole. In much of Aristotle's opus it is unclear whether the highness of the city's good is a qualitative or quantitative claim. If the difference is qualitative, this implies that there is a difference in the kind of the good 'the good' of political science is after, whereas if the difference is quantitative this implies that the city's good is superior in magnitude.[17] Like Plato, Aristotle deconstructs members of the politic into categories based upon what 'kind' of good they pursue, but this does nothing to standardize 'the good' *ipso facto.* The quantitative angle offers a rational explanation for community, since communities consist of individuals. However, in the next section I consider if there is a qualitative difference, and if so, how this qualitative difference

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[16] Aristotle, *Aristotle Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), 22-44.

[17] A quantitative explanation of the city's good's transcendence appeals to Mills and Utilitarian frameworks as it functions arithmetically.

destabilizes the congruence between moral considerations among general social roles, and interpersonal roles (such as friends).

1.5- Goodness; Essential or Historical

After explaining the political/social conception of the good, I consider a few reasons why this conception is pertinent to our discussion of virtue. Summarily, this is investigating if there is a qualitative difference between the two goods. First, the nature of evaluating individuals in interpersonal settings, and localized settings as opposed to the politic writ large is prima facie different. This returns us to the discussion of the general social roles people occupy, and the interpersonal roles and the different expectations internal to each category.

First, let's consider legal and interpersonal punishment. Punishment in both a legal and interpersonal sense is concerned with moral equality; being that people both adhere to moral/legal expectations and "get what they deserve" if they fail to do so. One juxtaposition we can make in this fashion is the manner in which a parent punishes a child, and the manner in which a government punishes a citizen. In the interpersonal setting between a parent and child, wrongdoing is evaluated more particularly than it is in the governmental (general social) setting. Determinations of guilt do not consist of a third party's evaluation (a jury/impartial judge or standardized judicial proceeding), but rely more on the convictions of those within the relationship. Moreover, the nature of the 'sentencing' is also more particularized in the interpersonal case, and general in the general social case. For example, when a citizen commits a crime, a sentence is recommended based upon a history of similar instances, otherwise referred to as "legal precedent." Individuals are, or ought to be, treated in an impartial fashion. The same cannot be said about the manner in which a mother evaluates how long her child should spend in timeout for breaking a certain familial expectation. The nature of the interaction in an

interpersonal setting is governed more by its emotive features than by its rational and impartial features. There is no 'legal language' behind the rules of 'timeout.'

Also, the expectations individuals, especially in liberal societies, have towards their government are different from the expectations they have towards their friends, or those with whom they have interpersonal ties. From government and society, we expect fairness, justice, and equity; from our friends we expect empathy, understanding, and, at times, discrimination which favors us. The level of emotional investment is different in each case, and so it is reasonable to expect that the moral contexts will be different, as well as the context of goodness, respectively. Right and wrong lacks contextual unification between the categories of different kinds of relations because we expect different things from people based upon who they are in our personal lives.

Yet, philosophers in antiquity do not make the distinction among the interactions between general political relations and interpersonal relations.

Aristotle speaks of man as a "political animal." He reasons that individuals constitute the polis naturally as if it is inspired by the same kind of goodness that inspires a brother to offer reconciliation to his sibling after a mutual hardship. What I have said above should at least give us pause when considering if the motivation for each relation is identical. It is for this reason we ought not standardize the motivation for all relations under one naturalistic framework.

As previously set forth, naturalism reasons from fixities and not activities, and thus does not pay attention to man in actuality, his pursuits, motivations, and desires. Naturalism ignores the difference between how man interacts with his friend compared to how he interacts with his government. Naturalism simply concludes that men form the polis and the diverse relationships that constitute the polis because it is natural to do so. It reasons that the governing 'morality' is

deployed in the same sense, irrespective of the relational features internal to engagements with each moral domain. There is no reasoning concerning how each, in tandem, contributes to a good life.

With this being said, let's briefly consider the site and actuality of social relations, and how they constitute the polis. These are still relationships just as in our interpersonal lives. The polis and society are an amalgam of relationships between people. Some of these relationships are, strictly speaking, productive. Some of them amount to political alliances. If man is by some means naturally political, then the natural component rests in the intensional, internal, psychological motivations to interact with others and form different kinds of relationships. Yet, as discussed above, the motivations behind these relationships, and the requisite expectations are categorically different.

For example, when a man is tried for a crime he expects his attorney to represent him with logical dispassion and impartiality; investigating and pursuing the facts in favor of his innocence irrespective of personal opinions. The man engages with the other *qua* attorney, or *qua* legal official. Yet, when it comes to the man's friend he expects passion. He expects his friend to offer a means of escape, or in some cases, to sacrifice himself.

Fundamentally, our discussion of relationships, and their role in ethics, depends upon whether or not the motivations to socialize are constant or dynamic, consistent or situational. For Aristotle and Plato, the motivations are static in either the social/political and interpersonal case. As Aristotle stated:

> Happiness is a starting-point since it is for the sake of it that we all do all the other
> actions that we do, and we suppose that the starting-point and cause of what is good
> is something estimable and divine. [NE I.13.1102a]

Thus, whereas the ancient Greek picture about which we have been reasoning synthesizes man's social character from natural features, the how, or 'by what means' is absent. If happiness is considered as philosophical ground, then there is no need to inquire as to how different kinds of relations contribute to happiness. The conceptual and consistent nature of 'good,' sufficiently accounts for any and all social relations, political or interpersonal. As Aristotelian scholar John M. Cooper writes, "all major systems of moral philosophy in antiquity are eudaimonist in their structure."[18]

Conceptually, the eudaimonist thesis regarding happiness is largely consistent. However, answering the question of friendship and its uniqueness in this manner ignores friendship's uniqueness on a superficial, conceptual basis. It does not answer why interpersonal, intimate relations bring us closer to a good life, nor why we are, at times, willing to sacrifice ourselves, and put our best interests aside for the good of our friends and intimate relations. To begin to differentiate friendship, let's consider the historical instability of purely 'productive relations' or even 'political relations.'

This divergence is best articulated via a dialectic analysis of production and productive relations. Relationships such as marriages, alliances, and even friendships are simultaneously productive and produced under a discursive picture. These relationships are 'produced' insofar as they are ideologically enforced, and productive insofar as they solidify, structure and edify the polis. Moreover, there is a reinforcing process that occurs as relationships form and reform, creating social codes and standards for how individuals ought to associate with one another.

However, this viewpoint does not discard our agency to form relationships altogether.

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18 John M. Cooper, "Eudaimonism and the Appeal to Nature in the Morality of Happiness: Comments on Julia Annas, the Morality of Happiness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, no. 3 (1995): 587, https://doi.org/10.2307/2108440.

People still enter into relationships for an apparent good, but what that good consists of, in actuality, and why individuals desire it, is not so simple. A cultural specificity governs the possible payoffs of certain relations, and this cultural specificity is determined more so by ideological forces than by individual choices.

Moreover, insofar as the pursuit of happiness is 'guided' or even 'determined' by ideological factors, then the reasons why we engage in relationships are not, entirely, our own. Said another way, we enter into relations because it advances our own good, but the manner in which this occurs is outside of our control. In lieu of this problem, if we are going to understand the role relationships play in our lives, then we ought to reverse the reasoning, and consider the sense of our happiness and 'the good' from the fact that we form certain kinds of relationships that could be considered friendships; genuine, intimate relationships that can inspire trans-personal considerations.

Thus, let's posit that while we can choose to reason *from* happiness-friendships, this does not mean that we ought not reason *from* friendships-happiness. The discussion that follows will experiment in order to determine what happens when we reason towards 'the good,' 'virtue' and 'happiness' from friendship and its 'nature.' My contention is that each is codependently consistent. Neither one possesses an independent essence. We should be uncertain if, as, Aristotle opines:

> Friendship and justice are concerned with the same things and involve the same people, for in every community there seems to be some sort of justice and some sort of friendship as well.[NE VIII,9,1160a]

We should consider if friendship affects us more genuinely, personally, emotionally and maybe irrationally. Moreover, it may be in lieu of this irrationality that friendship fulfills our lives, in ways that political and social relations fail to fulfill, and insofar as friendship fulfills our lives,

it is also a fundamental part of our moral sense.

Chapter 2

Defining Friendship

Friendships are a type of human relationship. What distinguishes friendship from social

relationships is not the same for all thinkers. For example, 'coincidental' friendships are imbued

with circumstantial, disingenuous factors. In this chapter, I will discuss these kinds of friendships

and how they are not, philosophically, the relationships that have the kind of moral value we

want to pursue.

The particularities, codifications and indescribability of complete friendships give it

moral particularities that distinguish it from other relationships. They enable, as French

philosopher Maurice Blanchot opined:

> The exchange of the same for the same… the discovery of the other as responsible for the
> other, the recognition of the other's pre-eminence, the awakening and sobering by the
> other who never leaves me alone, the enjoyment of the other's highness, which makes the
> other always nearer the good than me.[19]

Blanchot is signifying how friends can be a model for morally right action. Friends possess

a moral priority that gives them governing roles for one another. It is in this sense that Blanchot

acknowledges how "the other is always nearer the good than me."[20] By the processes through

which friends engage, they "awaken" and "sober" one another. This occurs both in thought and

activity, mirroring the Aristotilean constitution of virtue as (thought * character). For example, in

the process of choosing and identifying someone as a friend one acknowledges that the other has

something to offer that one at present lacks. Now, what the other offers can either be a function of

their powers or personality; dividing a line between 'coincidental' and 'complete' friendships.[21]

Yet, choosing a friend involves excitation. One must believe that they will benefit in some manner

by entering the association. Yet, this acknowledges simply the good of entering friendships, and

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[19] Blanchot, *For Friendship,* <u>Oxford Literary Review</u> Vol. 22, Disastrous Blanchot (2000), 38.
[20] Ibid.
[21] "Powers" refers to the things and objects a person governs, and this is pertinent when it comes to entering into relationships because they are a feature of what someone offers. "Personality" refers to the character of the person involved, and the sense of the thoughts and interactions pursuant to the engagement.

not the virtue practiced amongst friends, and the moral good this involves.

Indubitably, what people are willing to do for their friends, and what their friends are willing to do for them provides a road-map towards understanding right and wrong in interactions writ large. The friend provides the vessel for certain sensibilities. Friendships also impose a richer, diverse set of social taboos and mores we ought to follow; remaining within friendships forces us to evolve alongside one another and face new moral situations. Consider for example two friends that pass from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood alongside one another. In such a long lasting relationship, each person experiences changes pursuant to getting older. Thus, in order to remain friends, each must involve in a manner that remains bound to his friends, never developing a categorical moral disagreement.

Friendships are not just a way of understanding the other, but also a way of understanding ourselves. Like objects, friends mediate our relationship to reality, except unlike objects, friends are dynamic, conversational, and fluid. They respond to events alongside us, and determine how we judge these events. This is the mechanism by which friends influence our moral sense.

But before we delve too deeply into this kind of discussion, let's discuss how Aristotle conceived friendship and its connection to virtue, and morality in terms of friendship's trans-historical, essential and accidental features.

2.1- Aristotle's Friendship

Aristotle asserts at the start of his discussion of friendship that "friendship is   a sort of virtue or involves virtue." [NE 1155*3]

Friendship, unlike courage, temperance, generosity, or practical wisdom, is not a virtue. It is a *sort* of virtue, or even more ambiguous, 'involves' virtue. Unlike what precedes and follows in much of Aristotle's opus, this sentence is vague and unclear. It does not clearly demarcate the

metaphysical relationship between virtue and friendship.

Whether or not 'involvement' implies that friendship is involved in virtue regarding its epistemé (as in how one comes to know what is virtuous/morally right) or regarding its ontology (as in the very essence of virtue itself) is unclear. One possibility is that Aristotle wants what precedes (Book I-VII) to govern how we read his opinion on the essence of virtue. Another possibility is that Aristotle understands friendship as predicated upon virtue. In this case, the content of virtue's essence predicates the essence of friendship; meaning that virtue has an elevated, objective essence. Following this interpretation, friendships are both telling of who is virtuous, and telling as to what is an internal component of a virtuous way of life. They act as a safe-guard against political, violent, or manipulative forces intent upon robbing someone of goodness; nearly a natural condition of virtue for Aristotle, but they also function in identifying and verifying what one ought to pursue as their good.

But these opening marks are only pertinent to the politics of virtue, and material security. They are more about how friendship produces justice, which as we discussed in the last chapter, is not qualitatively alike. Friendship's affects within the polis are not equal to its affects in our interpersonal lives.

2.1- Aristotle's Coincidental Friends/ General Relationships

Aristotle's friendship is a kind of human relation. It is a way to understand how people involve each other in one another's lives. Friendship is a container to support certain kinds of activities that encompass virtue. The nature of particular friendships, and how individuals within these friendships associate with one another determine the kinds of activities that can occur within the friendship. Friendship is also a prerequisite for the practice of certain kinds of virtues. The distinctions between friendships are functions of the activities they support. What I hope to explain

in this section is how 'coincidental' friends are akin to general, even political, social relations; analogizing the kinds of friendships with the kinds of goods (social and interpersonal) that we took pause over in Chapter I.

Let's begin with an example. Consider two sculptors working on a statue together. Irrespective of any prior relationship the two may or may not have, when it comes to the statue, one associates with the other for the sake of an external good. All other things being equal, or having not met before, 'the good' in question is a product of the relationship, and not internal to it. Let's say one of the sculptors was fired by the contractor, and a new sculptor was hired to complete the project. All other things being equal, the benefit of the new relationship will be equal to the old one. The relationship is itself instrumental, and serves as a means to an end. This end may be the passion for the project, or it could be a payment the sculptors will receive for doing a good job. The inception, and duration of the friendship is coincidental and this is why Aristotle calls these friendships "coincidental friendships." These are a lot like alliances, or working relationships. To apply Aristotle's definition:

> {Each sculptor} feels affection because of what is good for themselves, and those who love because of pleasure do so because of what is pleasant to themselves [NE. 1156a].

The principle characteristic of these kinds of friendships is that they are preserved only insofar as they render a benefit to both participants. Each person is weighing their own benefits and burdens first and foremost. Friendships that people derive from erotic desire also fall into this category for Aristotle. They are, once again, a kind of 'coincidental friendship,' and are predicated upon selfish motivation. However, these two kinds of coincidental friendships seem different. The relationship or 'friendship' between the two sculptors is derivable from the 'social good,' this good being that of sculptures being created. It is very plausible for a society to exist that does not value sculptures, and so the 'friendship' is derivable, and influenced by the background discursive

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context. All coincidental friendships, or general social relations (as I would like to call them) are influenced by background social conditions.

Aristotle would largely agree with this assessment. The object of these kinds of friendships is fleeting, unstable, and unable to offer either participant with a fundamental level of *trust*, reciprocity, or mutual good-will. Political alliances also fall into this category. The friendship is somehow incomplete, or otherwise fails to instantiate in friendship's highest form. The reasons for each person's alignment is external to each other's personality. Each person is in some sense 'using' the other for his/her own powers, and using them for his own benefit. The lawyer and the accused criminal participate in this kind of friendship.

Without trust much of what makes friendship meaningful is inaccessible. When people participate in coincidental friendships they play functional roles that need not align with anything that individuates the participant. For example, a carpenter or a sculptor, within reason, can be replaced with another carpenter or sculptor. Of course some sculptors will be better or worse at their craft, and this may increase and decrease the pleasure sculptors derive from making the statue, but the quality of being a good or bad sculptor does not make someone irreplaceable as a person, only as a craftsman. For even the greatest sculptor, qua sculptor, is a modicum of his identity. Being a sculptor is only a segment of any one person's identity. Any one person is an amalgam of roles, and being someone's true friend is recognizing all of the roles they occupy; reaching closer to the person behind the personage, or the man behind the mask. Coincidental friends fall short of genuine, true appreciation of the other. The selfishness with which people engage in these relationships is transparent, and if it is not transparent then one of the parties is being manipulative.

Fundamentally, these relationships lack personal intimacy. The reasons for this can either be the individuals themselves, and their personal proclivities to seek their own advantage, rules and codifications that set limits on the ways people are inclined to interact, or even class structures that make it more unlikely for individuals to trust one another. The individuals engage with one another's power and not their personality.

2.2- 'Complete' Friendships

Complete friendships on the other hand place virtue on centre stage, and involve themselves with the friend's personality. They do so because the geniality of the relationship transcends circumstantial, contextual features, but pertains to the essences of the individuals themselves. Virtue is one feature of this genuine connection.

In order for a friendship to be 'complete' per se, then each participant must be "alike in virtue (NE 1156b)," according to Aristotle. The essence of the relationship must stretch beyond what is political and self-serving into a realm of *unconditionality* and possibly *selflessness*. Aristotle thinks that the participants must be "alike in virtue," in order to have complete friendships because, if not, then the participant of lesser virtue will take advantage of the participant with greater virtue. Mutual goodwill is also an important feature in these kinds of friendships or else neither person can trust their counterpart to "hold up their end of the bargain," in the friendship.

We notice this most often when friendships end, and how individuals tend to respond to that ending. A common complaint amongst former friends when a friendship or relationship is terminated is that one is being 'taken advantage of' for their goodwill. Yet, this does not include all friendships. Even in cases when a parent's child disavows them, or does not care for them in

a time of need, a parent's love, goodwill, or wishing well of their child is oftentimes present. This inconsistency (being that mutual goodwill is only sometimes necessary in friendships) either reveals that not all friendships are the same *de re*[22], or that certain friendships that Aristotle thought of as friendships should not be considered friendships, because they violate a necessary criteria. Thus, mutual goodwill may simply be an accidental quality of friendship as opposed to an essential quality.

Yet, before getting ourselves turned around by considering these possibilities, equity and mutual goodwill are not sufficient conditions for a friendship to be complete. There are other conditions involved in complete friendships.

One of these conditions, according to Aristotle, is "sharing life together." Complete friends must "get their hands dirty" in each other's business. An understanding of the other in these friendships must comprise the other's motivation, personality, virtues, vices, and also the underlying character. In order for this to be possible, individuals must experience, and understand the objects of their friend's lives. These objects may include familial trifles, work-related grievances, or preferences in sports, food, music, etc. As Aristotle opines:

> For nothing is so fitted to friendship as living together, since while people who are in need desire benefit, even the blessed desire to spend their days together.   [NE VIII.5.1158a]

When people have the ability to share their lives, they are able to consult and provide good things for their friends. Yet, even when friends are "asleep in separate places,"[23] or spend long times apart, they can preserve their friendship. Of course, this is only true of the friendships Aristotle considers 'complete.' Intuitively, friendships predicated upon contact, such as erotic

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[22] In fact.

[23] *[NE VIII.5.1159a]*

friendships, fail after long periods of time are spent apart, because the sexual or erotic contact is impossible to maintain at a distance, and nothing else, internal to the relation, is strong enough to maintain the requisite intimacy.

Companionate friendships, or those who become friends through "sharing life together," may be able to more easily withstand time spent apart because the kind of affection or love between the two is less virile, or, metaphorically, flammable. Much of the relationship between one's sharing life together, and 'complete' friendships are predicated upon the dispositions of those who occupy the friendships, and their requisite virtue. Nevertheless, "sharing life together" is another condition of 'complete friendship' (in at least some cases).

The third and final feature of friendships is one already touched upon above, but there is more to be said, because this feature is directly tied to virtue and even justice. This third feature is likeness of virtue. For as Aristotle opines:

> Insofar as he is a slave then, there is no friendship towards him, be insofar as he is a human being there is [friendship]. [NE VIII.11.1161b]

Likeness of virtue is as much an attitude as it is a state. In lieu of the quote above, social status or class is not determinative of who one chooses as a friend. There is a sense that people may put themselves on the same level as their contemporaries irrespective of status or class. Surely, class and status may affect the ability for individuals to reciprocate goodwill, but goodwill is oftentimes immaterial, and is simple as a kind smile, a hello, or a keen listening ear. Class is a background contextual feature, and thus, given that this becomes a feature that holds relationships back from their highest form, it is transcended when people act genuinely, honestly, and in a trustworthy manner pursuant to virtuous thought and character.

Individuals in different social situations may all offer this kind of mutual goodwill to one

another. At the same time, one could also say that it is hard for people in different social classes to "share life together," due to cultures of discrimination, yet this is just another example of the manner in which friendship emphasizes the difference between 'social good' and 'interpersonal good.'When a society is structured in a manner that inhibits people from 'sharing life together,' it fails to guide men towards 'happiness.'

Notwithstanding, we derive from the Aristotelian account of friendship that likeness of virtue, sharing life together, and mutual goodwill are the three principle components of 'complete' friendship. Now, when it comes to applying these principles to actual friendships, it seems that some friendships contain not all of the principles.

However, even after discussing the categories and conditions of 'coincidental' and 'complete' friendships in Aristotelian terms, this does not address the possibility of relationships moving in and out of these categories. The question is not simply why certain friendships end, but why certain friends move between what is 'coincidental' into what is 'complete.' The next section will consider what sort of phenomena governs these changes.

2.3- From Desire to Love; Friendship and Dynamism

Within ancient Greek, as well a continental philosophy, the overlap between friendship, love, and homo-erotic desire cannot be ignored. As such, in Plato's *Symposium,* Socrates and his interlocutors discuss love, beauty and the nature of their truth and connection. For our purposes, the importance of this discussion is the manner in which the inspirations shared between friends can stretch individuals beyond selfish/individual concerns to trans-personal considerations; wherein, individuals put another's interest above their own. The moments, and events when individuals act in this manner are significant in defining moral sense because the ends are categorically different.

The experience of caring for another person, either in a companionate or affectionate sense is prima facie irrational. Love is creative in a manner that connects the life-giving practices of the gods with the actions, and movements of humans according to Plato.[24] By my interpretation, the emergence, and changes in love, how individuals love, and who they love is what allows friendships to move between categories. Love is what unearths this methodology from a conceptual stasis that locks coincidental and complete friendships into their respective categories. It is also an element that forces us to consider whether it is appropriate to consider friendship as a thing with essential and accidental features, and not a dynamic element within a less stable process ontology that considers the definitions of friendship, and how this definition changes as a dynamic historical process with a spirit of its own.

But leaving ontology aside for now, love never occurs without an object. Without an object, love is only a potential. As Aristotle opines:

> For not everything is loved, it seems, but only what is lovable, and this is either good or pleasant… So what are lovable at the end are what is good and what is pleasant. [VIII.2.1155b]

Love is the desire to possess something beautiful that we, at present, lack. Yet, by the same token, it does not always follow the rules cast out in antiquity where eudaimonia is necessarily the end of all ends. It seems that love occurs in instances where it is necessarily doomed to hurt those in the friendship/relationship than help them. This is the element within which we are not in control. Yet, in spite of where and why love runs away from our own control, a strong gravitational pull is imposed on our mortal and moral sense by the way it inspires us to act. It moves relationships in and out of the different kinds of friendships, and (in its most inspiring moments) defines friendship itself, and moves its direction along the same lines as its particular inspirations.

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[24]Platón, M. C. Howatson, and Sheffield Frisbee C C., *The Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

We notice this movement by considering the affections, and mannerisms shared amongst friends in literature and history, and whether or not fundamental parts of this are dynamic.

One example of this is the literary relationship between George Milton and Lennie Small in John Steinbeck's novel, *Of Mice and Men.* The story takes place in California during the Great Depression of the 1930s where poverty and destitution ravaged markets and individuals alike. The novel follows the friendship between George and Lennie and is highlighted by Lennie's intellectual disability, and brutish capacities that leave him prone to accidentally killing animals because he enjoys petting them. George reflects how his life would be much easier if he did not have to care for Lennie. Yet, in spite of this, for reasons we could spend time debating, George remains by Lennie's side, and the two of them set off to chase the dream of owning and tending their own land in California.

One day, Lennie's intellectual ailment and brutish physique lead him to accidentally kill a young girl. Upon learning this, George knows that Lennie will not simply be killed, but that he will be tortured, beaten, and traumatized before dying at the hands of the local townspeople. With this in mind, George takes Lennie's fate into his own hands and kills Lennie himself. General interpretations of the story consider this a mercy killing, and a mercy killing that places a great moral weight upon George's shoulders. Our question from this example goes to the psychological eudaimonist, in what way is George doing this for his own benefit? George's actions violate a self-interested rationale. Is there something greater to make of this when it comes to the essence of complete friendship?

Although this is a literary and not a historical example, it resonates here and with Steinbeck readers because it involves responses from George that are both internal to the relation as well as responses to the background cultural and historical context. There is also no intuitive manner in which George stands to benefit from the friendship, yet he sacrifices his own energy, and

eventually his own virtue to help his friend navigate a world inhospitable to his particular proclivities.[25] Moreover, I think it is both intuitive and convincing to state here that we all hope to act in this way, if we are to consider ourselves capable of complete friendship.

This leads us to the theme of selflessness and self-sacrifice, and how true friendship offers a unique means for people to engage in this kind of so called 'irrational' behavior; irrational insofar as it in no way increases his or her personal happiness, and violates a eudaimonist approach to ethical thought.

2.4- Aristotle and The Possibility of Self-Sacrifice

Jacque Derrida's considers the possibility of self-sacrifice in *Foi et Savior* and comes to the conclusion that self-sacrifice consists of inflicting violence against oneself in order to spare others the same kind of violence. While sacrifice need not consist of as grave a feature as violence, the most drastic features of sacrifice will render the most genuine analysis of sacrifice and its relationship to friendships.

As we discussed in Chapter I, Aristotle's conception of virtue and friendship sees happiness as its ultimate end. He ascertains that there is a psychological eudaimonia that man is after. Even within our most fundamental relationships, and most complete friendships, this is the case for Aristotle. By this view, sacrifice is *always* self serving.

Contemporary thinkers such as Guy Schuh and Richard Kraut reckon that it is possible for a friend to benefit his friend for the sake of himself.[26] Other ethicists such as Connie Rosati and Joseph Raz also conclude that self-sacrifice may also constitute the sacrificing agent's own good, or more drastically, that self-sacrifice, as an act of pure, selfless motivation is impossible; saying

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[25] John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (London UK: Penguin Classics, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2023).

[26] Guy Schuh, "Friendship and Aristotle's Defense of Psychological Eudaimonism," *The Review of Metaphysics* 73, no. 4 (2020): 681–714, https://doi.org/10.1353/rvm.2020.0032.

that it is impossible to put another's self-interest over our own.[27] Even in cases where someone sacrifices themself in a violent manner, they do so out of 'self-interest.'

Guy Schuh reinforces his point by arguing that if we were truly selfless towards our friends, then we would wish for them to become gods, and transcend their ability to remain our friends.

But in my view, these kinds of conclusions are confusing. It certainly does not fit with the literary and historical instances of friendship like that between Lennie and George in Steinbeck's novel.

Just because we are limited to considering another's 'good' in terms of the 'human good' does not mean that we cannot consider another's 'good' selflessly. Human beings have the ability to relate to one another in both an intimate and theoretical manner that considers another's well being as if it were one's own; consider George imagining the kind of fate in store for Lennie if George does not intervene. The human imagination gives people this capacity, and we use it both when we relate to others as well as when we view fictional characters.

With this being said, the two major categories of self sacrifice are 'altruistic self-sacrifice' and 'egoistic self-sacrifice.' The difference between these two sacrifices is whether or not the agent doing the sacrificing expects to receive some benefit (in this life or the next) for their sacrifice.

Advocates of a psychological eudaimonia ascertain that those who sacrifice themselves in this manner do so because they cannot conceive of living in a world where they did not choose to

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  Marcel van Ackeren and Alfred Archer, *Sacrifice and Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2023) 201-208.

sacrifice themselves for the 'greater good.' However, in cases where one must die in the act of sacrificing themselves, this formulation is, prima facie, implausible. Either he who sacrifices is under a delusion or *selfless* motivation is in fact possible in certain relationships. These relationships are friendships strong enough to inspire selfless action.

Fundamentally, altruistic self-sacrifice is a quality of love, and thus, it can only be reasonably expected of people when they have a deep, true, complete connection with another person. Somehow, certain relationships, whether to a friend or a god, justify putting another above oneself.

The self-sacrifice ethos might transcend the features of 'complete' friendship about which Aristotle addressed. It is what signifies that someone is putting another on the same pedestal as the divine. I struggle to identify what other features might make a friendship more complete. The reasons why certain friends choose to abandon themselves for the sake of another is at times beyond any reasons for doing so. Sacrifice is irrational. It is radical, and is considered by many to be a supererogatory action; an action that goes 'above and beyond the call of moral duty.' It may also provide the key that distinguishes the interpersonal good from the social good. Besides the case of Socrates in the *Crito,* it is far more intuitive for people to sacrifice themselves for those they love than for a state, government, or those they relate to in the same manner.

Throughout this chapter we have discussed the categories of friendship in a static sense. The kinds of activities that hold 'complete' friendships together, define, and differentiate them from their 'coincidental counterparts was investigated. We have also investigated how, and in what manner, people can move between the different kinds of friendships.

In what follows, I will consider the substantive task of this thesis; the manner in which friendship defines morality wherever it exists. I will begin in Chapter III by investigating the manner in which friendship may solve the Marxist Historical/Genealogical problem. By doing so,

I will ascertain the fundamentality of friendship for one's own moral sense.

Chapter 3

Friendship and History; Objectivity over Geneology

Over the last two chapters, I have engaged with both morality and its vessel; this vessel, once again, being relationships and friendships. Moreover, I have been very suspicious about

which features of each we ought to consider trans-historical and what features are situational, and more largely, cultural; once again, the proper way for spouses to interact, or for merchants to negotiate, or even parents to discipline their child, are dynamic. Very little in the way of objectivity exists when it comes to the actions, or activities performed in themselves. There are historical and emotional processes that cause these features to outpace our tools for explaining them.

Nonetheless, I will consider the possibility that the quality of engaging with 'complete' friends has a trans-historical nature. My hope is that by explaining what I call, "the genealogical problem for objective morality" and considering friendship's formative power over moral ideas, we can understand something about the moral impulse that connects virtues and activities in a more fundamental way than cultural and historical circumstances. Friendship is distinctively human, and so long as we are human, it cannot be revoked. It is essential to the human experience.

3.1- The Geneological Problem

The Geneological problem is one that directly troubles virtue theory. The literature from which this problem is synthesized includes German continental, French, as well as some Anglo-American 'transcendentalist' philosophy. Notable thinkers that contribute to this idea include Albert Camus, Arthur Schopenhaur, Jean Paul Satré, Karl Jaspers, Søren Kierkegaard as well as other so-called existentialist thinkers such as even Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The principle problem is that nothing essential is contained within ethical discussions, and that right and wrong are principally cognitive phenomena completely subject to social and cultural changes. Most humanist's ethical perspectives are subject to this same problem. Friedrich Nietzsche presents this problem in an altogether robust manner in his pamphlet "On Truth and Lie

in a Nonmoral Moral Sense."[28]

The principle claim is that the process of abstraction wherein we derive concepts of 'good' and 'evil' from what is 'pleasurable' or 'harmful,' is nothing but a game of "blind man's buff, played on the back of things."[29] In other works, Nietzsche ascertains that there is a principle difference between 'social morality' or 'social good' as opposed to 'personal good.' He states how much of what are considered virtues are only virtues in terms of embodying weakness, or inaction. As Nietzsche writes:

> The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, unfolds its chief powers in simulation; for this is the means by which the weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves, since they are denied the chance of waging the struggle for existence with horns or the fangs of beasts of prey. [30]

Accordingly, virtue and morality are functions of man's proclivity to "exist socially," in "herd-fashion."[31] Language, and specifically moral language, does nothing to explain "the thing in itself."[32] They are nothing but bold metaphors.

Nietzsche regards these moral metaphors as unnatural impulses of the human imagination. Moral concepts such as "good," and "virtue" as well as particular virtues such as "courageousness," and "generosity" represent the workings of this unnatural imagination. It consists of science itself which moves thought away from "this x" to x. Yet, this kind of abstraction is unfounded according to Nietzsche. Moral science is nothing but a transcendental mythology, and by attempting to standardize these concepts, we are quibbling over categories without actuality.

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[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (S.l.: Aristeus Books, 2012).
[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, 2-8.*
[30] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, 6.*
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

Accordingly, the name of this chapter is the "Genealogical Problem." As discussed in Chapter I, a moral theory without grounding for "goodness," or "the good" lacks a necessary foundation. The reasons for forming relations, or attempting to achieve anything on the basis of some "moral community," is groundless. Affections of friendship, such as sacrifice, are rendered absurd, and when it comes to the "foundation of moral sense," there is nothing to be said about the polis or society.

The philosophical message for which thinkers like Nietzsche advocate is to disregard the polis, or the moral structures advanced by this so-called social morality. It involves looking past the 'collective purpose' in favor of a personal, self-determined, self-emanating purpose; a purpose that confronts and conquers its own absurdity through the recognition of a greater, inevitable absurdity. However, with this also comes the moral sensibilities we derive from friendships.

Cynicism towards relationships and friendships is also a function of Nietzsche's position. In lieu of the unreality of social roles, as well as social morality, Nietzsche fears that other people use guilt, manipulation, as well as commendation and reinforcement to compel people to occupy certain social roles. His word for this characteristic is *ressentiment.* Simple examples of this include a socially reinforced mode of dress, belief in a deity, or even the proper way to sit and drink a coffee. Another way to describe this is ideology and the means by which it is enforced.

Abandoning and disavowing these kinds of friendships is the result of pursuing a Nietzschean morality. It is for this reason that in Nietzsche's *magnum opus, Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* the chief conceptual persona (protagonist), Zarathustra, leaves society in favor of the forest pursuing a purpose beyond the blame or ridicule of those he considers "last men." Accordingly, the spiritual path must be walked alone, and the "free spirit," ought not be encumbered by relations.

A similar critique of relationships and friendships can also be derived from Jean Paul Satre's short story *No Exit*. The phrase, "hell is other people" is attributed to this story. Within the allegory, Sartre identifies the other's gaze as a kind of hell. He considers the dehumanizing effect of being aware of oneself as an object in another's view and the impact this can have upon the individual. The crucial choice characters in this story are forced to face is whether or not to remain loyal to their own conception of themselves, or to be troubled by the considerations of judgments of the other characters.

Summarily, the essence of the genealogical problem is that whenever ethical thought turns to relationality, and therefore subjectivity, the individual's very identity loses its sense. One must either turn to something like a private relationship with God, or some belief in a higher good, or his own private self-creations (Nietzsche's recommendation in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra).* Either approach undermines the actuality of communal life, and the roles that comprise the moral community. This includes both social/political life as well as interpersonal life.

Yet, it is my view that either of these approaches to a moral groundlessness, as well as the associative fear that gives rise to the genealogical, and existential problem ignores how, as Nietzschean scholar Allan Bloom writes, "love and friendship are distinctively human and inseparable from man's spirituality."[33]

3.2- Friendship and Perspicacity

The connection between friendship and spirituality is not simply a matter of love and sacrifice, but also, in some sense, how friends can know us better than we know ourselves. If this is the case, then the existentialist position to "walk the spiritual path alone," is vacuous. The definition of this path involves spiritual exercises that also involve friendship.

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[33] Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 7.

Epistemically, this is a peculiar idea. Most often, epistemologists speak of the mind, and one's own mind from a position of "privileged access," where the individual has a privileged position when it comes to one's own thoughts and ideas. The concept of privileged access follows that no one can know one's own thoughts besides oneself. From outside oneself, individuals can only engage with the other's behaviors. This includes both the words and phrases someone uses to describe their thoughts and feelings as well as the actions, movements, and bodily reactions. Notions of a path, or moral sensibilities and moral ideas fail under this guise.

For example, when considering someone else's pain, all someone else has access to is the fact that they use the word "pain" to denote their current state. There is nothing essential about the word pain that is consistent with a particular feeling. The behavior and words consist of a language game. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein describes this as a "private language argument," wherein nothing prevents someone from connecting words and phrases to affections in a counterintuitive manner. As Wittgenstein writes:

> "If 'something is going on inside him', then to be sure I don't see it, but who knows whether he himself sees it;"[34]

By this view, we are all incommensurably alone with our own thoughts and feelings. We have no way of knowing what is going on inside him, our friend, or anyone for that matter. However, in my view, this concept does not account for how, among friends, we can get into the habit of understanding one another. Sure, Wittgenstein is right when it comes to the general, "other person." When encountering the other we surely "do not know what is going on inside him."[35] Yet, what about the case when words, phrases, and behaviors stack atop events successively.

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[34]Ludwig Wittgenstein. Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, MS 176, p. 94.
[35] Ibid

The actual changes in a friend's quality of life, or state of being, can be witnessed from the outside if the two "share life together," for an indeterminate amount of time. As multiple instances of using a particular term to represent a certain feeling 'stack,' friends have a stronger epistemic authority to determine their friend's psychological state.

Of course, it is possible that in any one particular case, a friend can lie and mimic a particular psychological state by exhibiting certain behaviors and using certain words. Nonetheless, in any of these instances the friend ceases to be the friend. As the friend lies he violates certain internal characteristics of being a friend. Chief among these is geniality, or "mutual goodwill," which mischievous lying does not include.

Nonetheless, there is an epistemic process that friends embark upon in tandem, and as they endure events which are constituent of life, and share those events, they can come to know each other, maybe better than they know themselves. This is the case because we have the ability to see our friends from the outside.

Martin Buber's book, *Ich und Du* (I am Thou), justifies this quality shared between friends. When we engage with another person, and especially the friend, we are not engaging with an object via the third person, but something more dynamic from the second person standpoint.[36] Moreover, our means of relating to the world, and even ourselves has to proceed in one of these two directions. As Buber writes:

> There is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It. When a man says I, he means one or the other. The I he means is present when he says I. And when he says You or It, the I of one or the other basic word is also present.[37]

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[36].Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), 6-18
[37].Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), 8.

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Indubitably, language is a nexus of interaction; either between persons or things. 'I' cannot exist without another word for pairing. When speaking of oneself, one must always have reference. Feelings, thoughts, concepts and objects all involve third person interactions. "I am in pain," deconstructs to an I-It pairing, or I-(active verb)-it.

Even something like loneliness is an It. It is a feeling in the same way as pain is a feeling. It simply involves the combination of more nuanced sensibilities.

I-You word pairs function differently for Buber. Whereas I-It word pairs involve one mobile element; meaning 'I' can evolve and change with reference to 'It' (I can move in and out of states with objects), when it comes to I-You, both elements are mobile. I and You swim in circles around one another; identifying north, south, east and west with reference to the other person. As Buber writes:

> The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You.[38]

While standing and walking alone through the world, one can have knowledge of things, concepts and objects. Yet, one lacks the relation necessary for embodiment. Take pain for example. By observing, encountering and engaging with another, one can witness different embodiments of pain. One can witness the range of possible 'pains;' pains like a paper cut, losing a loved one, stubbing one's toe, etc. They can also do so without experiencing the pain themselves.

One learns the relation of these events to the word 'pain' by witnessing the other's engagement. An amalgam of experiences and encounters render a breadth of relational knowledge that is impossible alone. Words, objects, and the I-It interaction lacks this seminal quality that

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[38] Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), 9.

witnesses the moment's relational peculiarities. I-you connects to the present and escapes the past-minded gaze towards the 'has happened.' The event takes on a revitalized presence with 'you.' It is for this reason that Buber says:

> Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it. Our students teach us, our works form us. The "wicked" become a revelation when they are touched by the sacred basic word. How are we educated by children, by animals! Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity.[39]

Buber's use of the word 'currents' best describes the kind of relationality that defines our moral lives. There is a governing relationality that affects the roles we occupy, the meaning of the virtues that coincide and the 'social morality' that takes precedence. Yet, not everything is lost due to the other as Nietzsche and Sartre might lead us to believe. Other people are not essentially a problem. The other is a necessary part of ingesting, internalizing and acting upon past knowledge in the present. Complete friendships are constitutive of self-knowledge. An individual's insecurities, fears, social commitments and other biases hinder the individual, on his own, to understand himself. However, a true, genuine, honest friend can penetrate these barriers.

So whereas I-It relations do not comprise the essence of 'the good' or 'right and wrong,' in social situations this does not render a hopeless moral subjectivism. The friend acts as a mirror that reflects back upon us. The friend is a particular kind of you that constitutes self-knowledge and the meaning of moral truth. Friends can be as revealing as existentialists assert that they can be restricting. There is a balancing act between these two forces- restriction and perspicacity. However, as I will continue to argue, all is not lost.

We can see this phenomena in action by reconsidering a Platonic dialogue that is often interpreted to reinforce the restrictive character of friends in the individual's path towards self-

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[39] Martin Buber and Walter Kaufman, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1971), 19.

actualization.

3.3- The Friend inside The Cave

If we reflect on Book VII of Plato's Republic, dubbed with the monicure "The Simile of The Cave," we can see that the same sort of message dominates. In simple terms, the spiritual path must be walked alone. But to summarize the dialogue, Socrates tells a story to his interlocutor, Glaucon, describing a group of men chained up in a cave peering at a cave wall. Behind the wall to which they are chained is a bridge upon which travelers, merchants, children, priests and many other people pass over. Their shadows are illuminated from a flame behind the bridge and reflected upon the wall in front of the prisoners.

The prisoners, after looking at these shadows for years and years contrive systems of identifying what exists amongst the shadows. They contrive a system of who is the best and the worst at identifying these shadows. They create a science of their own, and with it a sense of virtue or skill at identifying these shadows. The shadows are the reality for these prisoners, and they contrive meaning and significance from nothing but these shadows.

This narrative is one that both Nietzsche and Marx might sympathize. The contents of the shadows are akin to ideology, and the roles, and virtues we occupy therein are as facile as shadows upon a wall. They fail to cut deep into the actuality of existence.

One day one of the prisoners is set free, why or how is unknown in the dialogue. Just as any social revolutionary or innovator, or an infant, or a child does not choose to be a revolutionary, or an innovator, so too does this 'unchained man' never choose to be unchained. This prisoner then follows the light to the mouth of the tunnel; seeing the lie that has constructed his entire life and ventures out into the sun to see the truth, to see the "light of reason." Upon 'seeing the light,' Socrates considers what will happen if this freed prisoner attempts to go back and release his

former brethren.

Not only does Socrates say that the prisoners will reject the liberated one, but also considers that he will be killed by those who are still chained up.

When it comes to this discussion, our concern is not simply for the metaphor concerning social revolution, and how people are resistant to their own liberation, but also the very wonder concerning why the unchained prisoner chooses to return to the cave at all. Why not simply run out into the meadow and abandon his past?

The reason the prisoner returns is because part of the process of self-overcoming, or self-actualization, requires that another acknowledges and verifies the same phenomena. Finding, identifying, and pursuing meaning requires the verification of others, even if the social systems that comprise other people doom those who overcome the limits of 'social' morality to condemnation. There is a strong sense that the friend is as much another self, as the self is a friend. The friendship relation is internal to 'self-knowledge' as we witness the qualitative difference between the I-You relation and the I-It relation.

Thus, to return to Aristotle, friendship is 'involved' with virtue insofar as its features challenge the knowledge of oneself, and the knowledge of another. Inasmuch, it seems that we treat friends as we treat ourselves as we pursue, and act on behalf of our friends' best-interest.

Friendships are vital to the decisions we make in order to determine the meaning of our lives, yet it is equally possible that they pose hindrances to our own freedom. It is possible that the people we consider to be friends hold us back due to their own preconceived notions, and sense of social responsibility. This is true in the case of the cave-dwellers in Plato's Allegory of the Cave who refuse to join the one who has left the cave and returned, but instead ridicule him.

Finally, I consider why this fear of friends, or the fear of friends holding us back is illusory.

One is either failing to acknowledge their agency to choose and re-choose their friends, or offering goodwill to those who are not intent upon offering true goodwill in return. It is both possible for friends to hold us back, and to inspire us to reach higher on our own respective 'ladders.' Yet, we have the agency to find and choose the 'right' sort of people along our own journeys.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In Chapter I, I discussed virtue theory and how particular moral sensibilities are distributed in terms of the roles people occupy within society. Social mechanisms that determine these roles are most often outside of any one individual's control.

In Chapter II, I discussed the interpersonal and social manner in which people are tied together in relationships that Aristotle casts as either 'coincidental' or 'complete.' Along the way, I discussed self-sacrifice and love as features that make friendship genuine, optimific and benevolent in almost any cultural setting.

In Chapter III, I discussed Martin Buber and his novel mechanics to explain the role friendship and relation play in moral epistemē (sense), while addressing the fear that friends are a curse as much as a blessing; holding us within hyper - socialized caves via judgment and guilt as opposed to being mechanisms for self-overcoming.

Altogether this discussion has been to argue that friendship is the fundamental relation through which we derive moral sense, the path to self-overcoming, and provides the meaningfulness of our lives. This is true because, at the very least, we select our friends, and if we select correctly our friends can, as Nietzsche writes, provide "the spurs for greatness." Moreover, the act of choosing friends, and living with our friends, negotiating some of life's difficulties provide opportunities for people to put their moral sensibilities into practice, and prove their character. Without this opportunity, the concept of moral sensibilities would experience a

great privation, and deprivation of meaningfulness. Making friends is necessary in order to capture

the fulness of human life, and no one can hope to achieve a virtuous life without his or her friends

walking a path alongside them; together carving the way as they go together.

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