

# Friendship and Fidelity: An Historical and Critical Examination

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FRIENDSHIP AND FIDELITY: AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL  
EXAMINATION

by

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ABSTRACT

FRIENDSHIP AND FIDELITY: AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL EXAMINATION

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Aristotle considers friendship the greatest external good, one integral to the attainment of happiness. However, while Aristotle limits distrust to what he calls imperfect forms of friendship, subsequent philosophers have stressed our uncertainty regarding the benevolence, beneficence and loyalty we may expect of friends. They do so in part because overcoming this uncertainty requires the exercise of the virtues of trust and loyalty if our friendships are to survive intact.

For example, insofar as Aquinas holds that we cannot scrutinize the wills of others – thus inviting uncertainty regarding their present and future conduct – he argues that friendship requires the virtue of hope as a cause of friendly love, a hope which helps us to make virtuous presumptions about others' wills. Likewise, Kant argues that all *de facto* friendships are plagued by epistemic uncertainty regarding the wills of others. In consequence, he treats loyalty as an unenforceable ideal of virtue (rather than as an enforceable and determinable right). Kierkegaard goes further, framing his treatment of non-agapic love – in which he argues that friendship cannot be ethically justified – with a discussion of deception in *Works of Love*.

If Aristotle is correct in thinking that friendship 'is a virtue, or involves virtue' (1155a1), and that 'loving is the virtue of friends' (1159a35), then addressing the epistemological, conceptual, and normative concerns these philosophers have regarding trust and loyalty between friends is needed to understand a central goal of the ethical life: the perfection of love. After a historical survey of the thought of these four thinkers

regarding the relationship between friendship and loyalty, this study suggests that contemporary problems about the origins, nature, and limits of loyalty can be fruitfully resolved using insights derived from the historical survey.

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Joshua W. Schulz

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Works by Aristotle

- Categories - *Cat.*
- Eudemian Ethics - *EE*
- Metaphysics - *Met.*
- Magna Moralia - *MM*
- Nicomachean Ethics - *EN*
- Politics - *Pol.*

## Works by Aquinas

- Summa Theologica - *ST*

## Works by Kant

- Critique of Pure Reason - *CPR*
- Critique of Practical Reason - *KpV*
- Critique of Judgment - *KU*
- Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals - *GW*
- Metaphysics of Morals - *MM*
- Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone - *Rel.*

## Works by Kierkegaard

- Works of Love - *WOL*

## INTRODUCTION

Three passages of Aristotle have always struck me as linked. The first occurs in the *Poetics*:

Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature of the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. ... To be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

The second occurs late in the tenth chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

For as in cities laws and character have force, so in households do the injunctions and the habits of the father, and these have even more because of the tie of blood and the benefits he confers; for the children start with a natural affection and disposition to obey.<sup>2</sup>

The third passage occurs in Aristotle's *Politics*:

... the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a 6 – 15.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9, 1180a 3 – 6.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.2, 1253a 14 – 18.

Of all the things one could say about these texts, I would like to trace out the connections they draw between familial love, learning, and morality.

Our first loves are loves we learn from others: warming by the fire after an afternoon of sledding; the humorous tale of Stuart Little and his friend Margalo; the first time you really *read* Aristotle. As we age, so do our loves. We develop new loves that attach to new things, to new people, and through them to the wide world. Multiplying our loves can multiply and challenge our loyalties, for our new loves form new bonds of care even while our old loves change. Sometimes they disappear, as did my teenage infatuation with rock music and my first best-friendship; sometimes our loves deepen and mature, as with the love we have for our parents. Eventually - for me, it was when I became a parent - we realize that what we most cherish is sharing what we love with others; the childhood of this 'other myself,' as Aristotle says, makes everything new. And so we come full circle, setting patterns in our words and actions that are imitated and then owned by each successive generation, patterns that bind us as a community, through time, not just in space.

While love is shot through with time, our strictest moral obligations, on the other hand, resist temporal description. While it makes sense to say that there was a moment when I gained the obligation to rear and nurture my children (say, at their conception), this obligation once gained does not wax or wane. I may discharge it differently at different times, responding to different circumstances, but never do I have it *more, less, or not at all.* The obligations I have towards my children I have independently of my feelings on the matter (as we must sometimes remind the cad) or other accidental circumstances, such as the distance we live from each other or my relationship with their mother: *that these are my children* constitutes a fact sufficient to ground their right to the support they need in order to mature into healthy, intelligent adults. Their being my children is not a necessary condition of having such a right, of course. Others to whom I am specially related have similar rights to which I have corresponding obligations, such as my wife, my students, and my friends. I gain these sorts of obligations through *roles* I fulfill or *offices* I hold (as parent, teacher, citizen, Catholic, brother, etc.). I hold most of them in virtue of my personal history, that is, my 'place' in relation to others as well as actions

I've done and decisions and commitments I've made at some time or other.

However, the above description of my ethical obligations in terms of rights and duties leaves out precisely the facts that we began with: our loves. Imagine learning your spouse is having an affair. Surely that's an act of injustice insofar as it violates the marital right of fidelity. Imagine the affair was with your best friend. That's worse, in a real sense, than an affair with a stranger would be. An affair with one of your siblings or parents is so much worse than an affair with your friend as to be nearly unthinkable. While the unqualified action - adultery - is the same in each case, each of our subsequent qualified descriptions - adultery with a friend, with a relative - is morally worse precisely because of the degree of betrayal involved, that is, because of an additional fact diametrically opposed to the behavior we expect from our friends and parents. That additional fact is *loyalty*, which requires that they remain practically committed our interests even in the face of temptation. The more we think of ourselves as someone's beloved, the worse do we think his or her betrayal.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that however patient and kind love is, it is never owed. It cannot be demanded of a lover as one's due. We have no right that others love us. This pains us the most, perhaps, when the ties of dependence and trust are thickest. It would be excruciating to think, for instance, that you are not wanted by your parents even if they feed you, clothe you, and educate you, as great literature has constantly reminded us, say, in the figures of Huckleberry Finn, Harry Potter, and Ivan Karamazov: some care is 'hollow.' Ivan in particular - like David Hume, perhaps - recognizes that the ultimate heartbreak would be a god who gave life without love. Our hearts would be restless without respite in such a world, and we would be left only the cold comfort Camus paints for us in the last lines of *The Myth of Sisyphus*.<sup>4</sup>

There is a sense, then, that lacking what we can justly demand by right from others is better than lacking what we cannot so demand and that there is no remedy for this.

That is the risk of love.

Yet we do expect that once we are loved we will continue to be loved, and the name for what we expect is loyalty.

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<sup>4</sup> "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (Alfred Knopf, 1955), p. 90.

We have a host of names for those who violate this expectation - apostate, back-stabber, betrayer, deserter, double-crosser, fink, impostor, snitch, stool pigeon, treasonist, turncoat - sometimes the names of the traitors themselves - Benedict Arnold, Judas, Quisling - and save for them the coldest parts of hell.<sup>5</sup> However, to make a distinction, not every act of disloyalty involves betrayal or injustice. Sometimes, as we noted above, we simply stop loving something and begin loving something else, as when we buy a new brand of automobile or decide to change textbook publishers. How this distinction is drawn will be one of our topics in what follows. In general, this dissertation proposes to investigate some of the conceptual linkages sketched above between our special relationships, affections, loyalty and justice. We will specifically focus on the relationship between friendship and loyalty.

## **Friendship**

Friendship has been an object of ethical reflection since the time of Plato. Recent decades have seen a resurgence

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<sup>5</sup> Dante saves the frozen lake, Cocytus, at the center of the ninth circle, for traitors: those who falsified their special relations with others through acts of betrayal and violations of loyalty. Satan, who betrayed God, is frozen in the center with Judas in his mouth. See Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 34.

of interest in the topic, partly due to renewed interest in virtue ethics.

Aristotle wrote what is considered the classic treatment of the topic. Other major thinkers, including St. Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and Søren Kierkegaard, have departed from him to varying degrees. Some of the differences can be attributed to cultural and historical changes in the notion of friendship; other differences reflect genuine philosophical disputes. For example, while Aristotle considers friendship the greatest external good, one integral to the attainment of happiness, Kierkegaard's radical brand of Christianity leads him to challenge whether friendship (or any form of preferential love) can be ethically justified. Kant argues that, in the strictest sense, while friendship is a perfect amalgam of morality and happiness, it is also 'merely' an 'ideal,' found nowhere on earth. To take another example of departures from Aristotle, consider that Aristotle limits distrust to what he calls imperfect forms of friendship.<sup>6</sup> Nearly everyone else disagrees. Aquinas, Kant and Kierkegaard all stress our uncertainty regarding the benevolence, beneficence and loyalty we may expect from even the best of

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 1157a20-25.

friends.<sup>7</sup> They emphasize this uncertainty in part because overcoming it requires the exercise of trust and loyalty. Insofar as Aquinas holds that we cannot scrutinize the wills of others, for instance – thus inviting uncertainty regarding their present and future conduct – he argues that friendship requires the virtue of hope as a cause of friendly love, a hope which helps us to make virtuous presumptions about others' wills. Kierkegaard goes further, framing his key distinction between agapic and non-agapic love with a discussion of deception.<sup>8</sup> If Aristotle is correct in thinking that friendship “is a virtue, or involves virtue,”<sup>9</sup> and that “loving is the virtue of friends,”<sup>10</sup> then addressing the epistemological, conceptual, and normative concerns these philosophers have regarding trust and loyalty between friends is needed to understand the central goal of the ethical life: the perfection of love.

While there has been renewed philosophical interest in both friendship and loyalty in recent decades, there are

<sup>7</sup> Even St. Augustine argues that Terence's 'evils of love' (including "wrongs, suspicions, enmities, reconcilements, [and] war") occur frequently "even in honorable friendships" (*De Civitate Dei* XIX, 5).

<sup>8</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. and ed. Howard and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995): chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *EN*, 1155a 1.

<sup>10</sup> *EN*, 1159a 35.

few studies that analyze their relation in depth. This is puzzling. It is widely acknowledged that loyalty is necessary for friendship: disloyalty destroys a friendship. However, we can be loyal to those who are not our friends, as the soldier is loyal to his country, and loyal towards things that are not alive, such as a brand name. Friendship entails loyalty, but loyalty is possible without friendship, and while injustice towards a friend entails that one is disloyal to them, not every act of disloyalty entails some injustice. How exactly are the concepts related?

One way into this topic is by way of the following argument. Everyone agrees that

1. Loyalty is a necessary condition of friendship.

To this we can add a statement about the conceptual conditions surrounding loyalty:

2. Loyalty requires beliefs about the value of the friend or the relationship which derive their justification from knowledge about (a) one's own character and commitments, (b) the friend's character and commitments, and (c) some relation between (a) and (b).

However, we'll see that Aquinas, Kant and Kierkegaard all disagree with Aristotle in holding that

3. There is no knowledge of (a) and (b).

What follows is that

4. Loyalty is never justified, and neither is friendship.

Friendship and loyalty are justified only if the requirements (2) imposes on the relation are met.

Clearly (4) flies in the face of common sense. In order to reject it, however, we need to reject or amend one of the premises. One way of reading premise (2) is clearly too strong, i.e., so as to make it require indubitability, although it is likely that what we need is simply probable evidence. So to avoid this problem we can amend (2) to (2'), like this:

2'. Loyalty requires beliefs about the value of the friend or the relationship which derive their justification from knowledge (justified true beliefs) about (a) one's own character and commitments, (b) the friend's character and commitments, and (c) some shared properties between (a) and (b).

(2') implicitly admits that there is an element of risk in loyalty. If we had indubitable knowledge of the sort required by (2), this element of risk would be nonexistent.

We can ask several questions about (2'). First, although loyalty requires beliefs, it is primarily a kind of act or disposition to act. So the first question we can ask is *descriptive*:

- What sorts of acts are acts of loyalty?

Insofar as loyalty also involves beliefs, the second sort of question we can ask is *epistemological*:

- What conditions need to be satisfied for beliefs about (a), (b), and (c) to be justified?

We need clear answers to these questions in order to correctly formulate an answer to normative questions about the nature and scope of the obligations to be loyal we acquire in virtue of being friends with another person.

However, various thinkers answer the descriptive and epistemic questions in different ways and assign to the questions various levels of importance and priority.

- Aristotle seems to think that the descriptive question is prior to the epistemological question: friendship requires a life of shared virtuous activity. The evidence required for knowledge of the character of two friends follows as a matter of course from their life together. Given world enough and time, that is, one's character is (necessarily?) revealed by one's actions. This argument can be bolstered using Stern-Gillet's interpretation of the Aristotelian conception of 'self' as an 'achievement state' rather than as an ontological term, as we'll see in Chapter 2.<sup>11</sup> Its core commitments are easily threatened, however, by something people do every day: lie in word and deed.
- Aquinas, on the other hand, thinks the epistemological question is prior to the descriptive one: beliefs about the character of another are always dubitable, so friendship (and a *forteriori* loyalty) requires both hope and charitable presumption about the wills of others. The problem for Aquinas is to determine how loyalty can be justified *in advance* of long acquaintance with another person's character.

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<sup>11</sup> Susanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995): p. 28 ff.

- Kant can be read as returning to Aristotle in one sense: what loyalty consists in is an *a priori* matter, and so the descriptive question is prior to the epistemic one. However, Kant also argues that all *de facto* friendships are plagued by epistemic uncertainty regarding the wills of others. In consequence he treats loyalty as an unenforceable ideal of virtue (rather than as an enforceable and determinable right).
- Kierkegaard radicalizes Kant's subjectivizing of our obligations of loyalty. Ultimately, at least in the case of *eros* and *philia*, he rejects (2') and keeps (2). He argues that insofar as friendship and loyalty are unjustified yet desired, their justification must come from beyond desire, from agapic love. Kierkegaard's agapic conception of loyalty is primarily a kind of action, one that may be associated with, but is not determined by, beliefs about the other person. The beliefs themselves do no justificatory work.

There is a clear pattern to this analysis.

- Aristotle argues that we can have good reasons, based on knowledge about the character of a friend, for friendship and loyalty.
- Aquinas argues that, insofar as our beliefs about the character of another person are insufficient to ground friendship and loyalty, we need further beliefs and dispositions (hope and charitable presumption) to provide the warrant for friendship and loyalty.
- Kant argues that friendship is an ideal, praiseworthy but unattainable due to uncertainty. Loyalty is expected and lauded, but grounded in nothing outside of our own quest for perfection. But our perfection involves the complete good and so the good of others.
- Kierkegaard argues that, insofar as our beliefs about the character of the two friends are always insufficient, the only warrant for friendship and loyalty is a subject's desire for friendship. This warrant fails to ethically justify friendship.

In sum, as epistemic certainty in our beliefs regarding the character of friends diminishes, the greater the role fidelity must play in friendship. However, the perceived risk of deception in friendship grows as well. The perceived value of fidelity grows in relation to the growth

of the risk (as Johannes de Silentio says, witness the fidelity of Abraham).<sup>12</sup>

Another way to approach the relation between friendship and loyalty is through a brief comparison and contrast of the two concepts. Clearly, for instance,

1. Both friendship and loyalty involve care for the other *for the sake of* another.

Care includes both passive and active components.

Passively, we usually sympathize with our friends and those to whom we are loyal; we are moved to feel joy, shame, pity and pride by events affecting our friends or the objects of our loyalty. Actively, we are disposed to act beneficently for what we perceive to be their good, even at some cost to ourselves. Such actions are commonly thought to be supererogatory outside of special relations such as friendship, and their being required of us in virtue of our special relationships needs to be explained.

Second,

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<sup>12</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

2. Both friendship and loyalty require 'affiliational attachments,' i.e., shared value commitments to something that is intrinsically valued.

When both loyalty and friendship have, as their objects, a particular person or 'thing,' a failure to conform to a distinct set of values to which we have a deep commitment is a ground for discontinuing loyalty or terminating a friendship. Hence, a shared set of value commitments seems to be a necessary condition for both friendship and loyalty. Perhaps the sort of value commitments in question are what Bernard Williams has described as 'identity-conferring,' which may also help explain Aristotle's description of the friend as 'another self' - another person with a similar value identity.<sup>13</sup>

Third, and finally,

3. Both friendship and loyalty involve commitment to the special relationship over time.

John Kleinig's article on loyalty in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* characterizes it precisely in terms of the "stickiness" that loyalists display towards

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<sup>13</sup> See Bernard Williams, "Integrity," in J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (New York: Cambridge, 1973): pp. 108-117.

the objects of their loyalty. In fact, one major trait of loyalty is that "the loyal person acts for or stays with or remains committed to the object of loyalty even when it is likely to be disadvantageous or costly to the loyal person to do so."<sup>14</sup> Thus, Kleinig gives the following definition of loyalty:

a practical disposition to persist in an intrinsically valued (though not necessarily valuable) associational attachment, where that involves a potentially costly commitment to secure or at least not to jeopardize the interests or well-being of the object of loyalty.<sup>15</sup>

We will take this definition as 'standard' throughout this dissertation, and will return to assess it in the conclusion in light of our historical survey of the topic.

However, there are also numerous and important ways in which friendship and loyalty differ. One such difference is the fact that we can be loyal to non-living objects, such as brand names, sports teams and religious ideals, while friendship is confined to human beings who *recognize* and *reciprocate* each other's friendship. Which of these has the most value is a matter of some debate. Dante, for instance, makes the betrayal of guests worse than the

<sup>14</sup> Kleinig, John, "Loyalty", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/loyalty/>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

betrayal of one's country, which itself is worse than the betrayal of one's brother.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, whereas friendship involves benevolence on the part of friends toward each other, we need not feel benevolent toward objects of loyalty. If Kleinig's definition of loyalty is correct, then I might be called a 'loyal' Starbuck customer because I find their location to be convenient even though I wouldn't go out of my way to do them favors.

Finally, while both loyalty and friendship involve evaluative attitudes about their objects, it is not clear whether these attitudes are natural attitudes (attitudes we 'grow up with' or 'find ourselves' with, as towards family members), attitudes of response (attitudes which respond to some worthy state of affairs) or attitudes of bestowal (attitudes that confer value on their objects). Nor is it clear how we come to have these attitudes. The issue concerns the origin or basis of loyalty and friendship. It seems clear that loyalty can be based on any of the three (some loyalties are natural, some involve a response to value, and some involve bestowal). This may be the case in friendship as well, but not quite so clearly. I, for one, would doubt that a friendship-of-bestowal (pity

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<sup>16</sup> See *Inferno*, Cantos 32 - 33.

friendship?) can count as a true friendship, which is not to say that it couldn't become one. Aristotle would prefer to call it a master-slave relation rather than a friendship.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation will survey the thought of four major thinkers - Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant and Kierkegaard - on the relationship between friendship and loyalty.

The first chapter, on Aristotle, will have two goals. The first goal is to introduce readers to Aristotle's ethical philosophy, particularly as found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In particular, the chapter will focus on the ability of functional analyses of human nature to generate normative claims about human action and the three possible motivations human beings can have for any given action, i.e., pleasure, advantage, and the noble. Aristotle's distinction between the *good for man* and the *apparent good* will also be discussed. It will be argued that these three strands of Aristotle's thought are central to his account of friendship in Books 8 and 9. The second goal of the chapter is to briefly outline Aristotle's theory of friendship by focusing on its value as the "greatest external good" and its causes. This latter

discussion especially has implications for Aristotle's theory of special duties and loyalty, which are discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 8 and 9 and in corresponding passages in *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia*. *EN* Book 9 discusses two causes of friendship. The first is *eunoia*, or the recognition of excellence (*EN* 9.5). The second is the person himself; friendship, Aristotle says, proceeds "from a man's relations to himself" (*EN* 9.4). That insight grounds Aristotle's description of a friend as "another self." The practical implications of this teleological analysis are explored in the problem of "fallen friends" in Chapter 2.

Aristotle treats *eunoia* as no more problematic than being able to recognize an excellent athlete (*EN* 9.4). Thomas Aquinas, while agreeing with Aristotle's theory of friendship in other respects, disagrees about this. This disagreement will be the focus of Chapter 3. Aquinas argues that the present and future wills of other people are unknown to us, and thus that a successful friendship requires (a) a cognitive presumption about the goodness of our friend's will (analogous to a presumption of innocence in the law), and (b) the virtue of hope. These views of Aquinas will be explored, and the results used to

investigate the concept of loyalty in Aquinas. Loyalty, for Aquinas, requires a similar presumption about its object, even when this presumption entails some risk to the self.

In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant continues Aquinas' investigation into the implications that uncertainty about other people's wills has for our obligations as friends. After briefly discussing Kant's general ethical theory and his distinction between the *doctrine of right* and the *doctrine of virtue*, his treatment of friendship is discussed. His views of friendship are discussed in the context of his thoughts about the relation of justice (rights) and benevolence (care, or practical love). I argue that Kant's conception of friendship is a concrete instantiation of his concept of the *summum bonum*, first discussed in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. His description of the *summum bonum* has ethical implications for the duties we owe to our friends. This last point is especially important since, unlike Aristotle, Kant believes that all of our friends are fallen, as are we.

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard challenges the theories of friendship found in Aristotle, Aquinas and Kant. Kierkegaard pursues three main lines of attack. First, he

argues that friendship is grounded in emotion and sentiment, and for that reason it is (a) ethically questionable if not unjustifiable, and (b) incapable of contributing to human happiness in the way that even Kant attributed to it. On this basis, and against Aristotle, Kierkegaard then argues that the excellence of love is expressed non-preferentially, that is, in forms of love that do not favor one person over another. Like Aquinas, on the other hand, Kierkegaard argues that the love involved in friendship requires trust and hope, but he also argues that this trust is non-evidential and primarily practical rather than cognitive, a task rather than a belief. Kierkegaard's views are very much at odds with previous views about the causes, nature, and justification of friendship – that is, those found in Aristotle, Kant and Aquinas. For that reason, we will spend some time evaluating his critique. Finally, we will examine two objections to the position that friendship and loyalty are genuine moral reasons in chapter 6, and use what we have learned from the historical survey to shed some light on them.

## CHAPTER 1. ARISTOTLE ON FRIENDSHIP: FROM APPLES TO ETHICS

"Art partly completes what nature cannot bring to completion and partly imitates her." - *Physics*, 199a 15-17

"The man who is to be happy will therefore need virtuous friends." - EN 9.9, 1170b 18

### 1. Introduction

Eris, angry because she has been excluded from the marriage festivities of Peleus and Thetis, throws her golden apple 'To the Fairest' among the celebrants. The revelers do not agree to whom the apple rightfully belongs, and the goddesses Aphrodite, Athena and Hera each claim the prize as their own. Young Paris is prevailed upon to judge the issue, each goddess promising him appropriate rewards - pleasure, honor or glory - if she is chosen. Although comforted by Hermes, Paris is rightly frightened. The golden apple represents a choice of lives, a question about what kind of good thing is most choiceworthy, what good will make life worth living.<sup>1</sup> He chooses.

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<sup>1</sup> As Plato says in the *Republic*, 344e.

Thus begins, among other wars, Western ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle offers us the apple in the first few pages of his *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>3</sup> Slightly altering Homer's list, Aristotle argues that the categories the goddesses represent - pleasure, utility, and the noble - exhaust the ways in which something can be good for us and thus exhaust the sorts of reasons for which we might choose anything at all. Like Newton many centuries later, Aristotle saw that there are systematic relations between goods and the beings they attract - in Aristotle's case, that there is a regular relation between objective goodness or excellence and our subjective idea of the good considered as a reason for doing whatever it is that we do. The further observation that this relation is normative - that some of the reasons

<sup>2</sup> The golden apple is ubiquitous in Greek thought. We can read it in Greek history, embodied in Homer's *Iliad*, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars*, and Plato's dialogues. We find Plato speaking about it in his division of humanity into the many sight-lovers, the few guardians, and the singular philosopher-kings. Aristotle repeats Homer's division of the three lives at the center of both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, characteristically treating them both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, as possible goals as well as developmental stages, both of individuals and of entire societies.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the "three prominent lives" Aristotle canvasses in *EN* 1.5, 1095b17ff with his claim in *EN* 2.3, 1104b30-31, that there are "three objects of choice ... the noble, the advantageous, [and] the pleasant ..." All references to Aristotle are taken from translations in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984).

for which we seek good things are more or less well-suited to our flourishing – takes us from apples to ethics.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter we will examine Aristotle's views on one topic to which this distinction between the real and the apparent good is applied: friendship. This will involve, first, examining the nature of friendship according to Aristotle, and second, examining the place and role of friendship in light of Aristotle's larger ethical theory.

## **2. Friendship, Art and Nature**

Friendship, for Aristotle, is a natural and a made thing, as are constitutions, virtue, poetry, and wisdom.<sup>5</sup> It is natural to our kind of thing to be social. It is also natural for our characteristic excellences to be realized through deliberation and choice,<sup>6</sup> and friendship "is an

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aristotle's *Politics*, 7.13, 1331b 26-30: "There are two things in which all well-being consists: one of them is the choice of a right end and aim of action, and the other the discovery of the actions which contribute towards it; for the means and the end may agree or disagree."

<sup>5</sup> As my former teacher, Gene Fendt, has pointed out in *Love Song for the Life of the Mind: An Essay on the Purpose of Comedy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007). As a made thing, friendship has a further double source (as do virtue and wisdom), namely, partly we are made into friends (or virtuous or wise) by others, and partly we are made so by our own choices and acts.

<sup>6</sup> This idea forms the first property named in the *definiens* of moral virtue at *EN* 2.6, 1106b 36: "Excellence, then, is a state concerned with choice ...".

excellence, or implies excellence"<sup>7</sup> insofar as the reciprocal loving characteristic of friendship "requires decision, and decision comes from a state" of character.<sup>8</sup> Methodologically, this line of reasoning suggests that the *teleic* analysis appropriate for a *tool* or *artifact* - whose efficient, formal, and final causes are characteristically distinct from one another and extrinsic to the object - and the *teleic* analysis appropriate for a *natural, living being* - whose efficient, formal, and final causes are characteristically identical to one another and intrinsic to the being - are not mutually exclusive in the case of human beings.<sup>9</sup> Before showing how Aristotle applies both sets of analyses to friendship, let's consider what the applicability of both sorts of considerations imply about the nature of ethical reflection.

Aristotle argues that artifactual analysis is both *functional* and *normative*.<sup>10</sup> Just as we evaluate our

<sup>7</sup> *EN* 8.1, 1154b 3 – 4.

<sup>8</sup> *EN* 8.5, 1157b 31.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle distinguishes the four causes in *Physics* 2.3, and argues that "the form, the mover, that for the sake of which ... often coincide; for the what and that for the sake of which are one, while the primary source of motion is the same in species as these" at *Physics* 2.7, 198a 25 – 27.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *EN* 1.7, 1097b 24 – 27: "For just as a flute player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well'

creations according to their ability to achieve our purpose in creating them - as when one discards a dull knife because it is unable to cut - so too can we evaluate whether the actions human beings choose for a purposed end are well or ill-suited for that end. Imagine, then, that there is an *ultimate* end for the sake of which we do everything else. If this end were *shared* by all human beings, then every human action could be evaluated according to its ability to achieve this ultimate end, and the features of actions that were regularly conducive to this would be prized.

In a famous series of arguments, Aristotle argues that this is in fact the case. We cannot intelligibly explain any human action without reference to the purpose it is intended to achieve.<sup>11</sup> That purpose will be either final or a means to achieving some other purpose. Yet the regress of explanatory reasons for action cannot be infinite: an explanation is either finite or else no explanation at all. We shop for ingredients for the cake for the party for the boy to make him happy because making our children joyful is part of what makes life worth living. The worth of that

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is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function."

<sup>11</sup> NE 1.1, 1094a 1 - 17.

final goal, the 'fine life' that Aristotle calls *eudaimonia*, 'passes on,' so to speak, value to the means we choose to achieve it, and makes the grocery shopping choiceworthy. (One feature of actions like this that regularly contributes to the achievement of *eudaimonia* is generosity, and for that reason we praise it as a virtue.)<sup>12</sup> Finally, argues Aristotle, precisely because everyone cites *eudaimonia* as the final *explanans* of their actions, and because everyone conceives of this *explanans* in the same way – as a final, self-sufficient, and complete good – *conduciveness to eudaimonia* (multiply instantiated in the virtues) provides us with a universal and necessary criterion for the evaluation of human actions.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the criteria by which we must judge these means-ends relations are neither our own creations (as Sartre holds) nor negotiable (as the Social Contract tradition argues); they are second-order principles respecting first-order functional descriptions of our natural kind of being. If, as Aristotle writes,

the function of man [is] a certain kind of life, and this [is] an activity or actions of the soul implying

<sup>12</sup> "Eminence in respect to excellence being added to function" (*EN* 1.7, 1098a 11), Aristotle says, deserves praise by reference to *eudaimonia* (1101b 20 -1, 33 – 34).

<sup>13</sup> *EN* 1.7, 1097b 20.

a rational principle, and the function of a good man [is] the good and noble performance of these ... [then] the human good turns out to be activity of the soul in conformity with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete.<sup>14</sup>

If our nature were different, our characteristic excellences would be different. If we were fish, our excellences would render us suitable for aquatic life. Since we are not fish, we do not think it a deficiency of our nature that we are born with lungs rather than gills. We do, however, think that the failure of a person to develop or exercise her rational capacities makes her unable to lead a fully flourishing, satisfying human life. Voluntary failures of this sort are blameworthy – insofar as a fully rational human being would do otherwise, so ought we – as are voluntary successes praiseworthy. In summary, then, Aristotle argues that *what* a human life is and *what it is for* are determined by reference to our natural kind; *how* that life is realized is determined by the choices we make as individuals and the habits we develop as a result of those choices; and the *value* of our

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<sup>14</sup> EN 1.7, 1098a 12-17.

life is thus a relation between *physis* and *phronesis*, between nature and art.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I will not explicitly defend the metaethical claim that a functional description of human nature is able to ground an objective, normative evaluation of human life, important though this thesis is. What will be investigated is the Aristotelian thesis that the activity of friendship, whose functional aims include social excellence, immunity from bad fortune, and the practice of noble (and noble-making) acts, can be subject to normative analysis grounded in these aims. On the one hand, Aristotle argues, such aims are intrinsic or natural to friendship in virtue of our being embodied, rational and social beings. On the other hand, he continues, we can engage in the activity of friendship – as we can any activity – for any or all of several reasons: because the activity gives us pleasure, because the consequences of the activity are advantageous to us, and/or because we find the

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<sup>15</sup> See EN 2.1, 1103a 23 – 25: “Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do excellences arise in us; rather, we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.” I have given a very naturalistic account of what human excellence is in this paragraph; however, the particular content of the excellences, and their manner of instantiation, is very much determined relative to a culture for Aristotle. Naturalistic analysis grounds, but does not exhaust the nature of, any particular human excellence.

activity itself *kalon*, that is, fine and noble. Friendship, of course, naturally possesses or aims at the realization of all of these ends (though not all in the same way). Since we can decide on our final causes, however, we need not seek all of them all of the time: *how* we are friends is a product of deliberation and choice. And there's the rub: though the reasons we have for being friends with someone will determine how we conduct the friendship, various patterns of conduct will be more or less well-suited to realizing the functional aims intrinsic to the activity itself. It is thus that Aristotle can say that some friendships are better than - happier than - others.

One consequence of the approach to ethics outlined above is that the activity of ethical thinking is itself subject to normative analysis grounded in functions natural to our kind of being. That we form concepts of the good and benchmarks of right action is a natural outcome of practical reason's interaction with the world and its social environment, and Aristotle considers that such activity is undoubtedly good for our kind of being. Since this is so, and since our character influences what we think is good in the same way that physical training

influences how much Milo can lift,<sup>16</sup> the normative and therefore practical conclusions we draw about who we should be and what we should do involve confessions in various voices: about our experience and cognitive capacities, on the one hand – ethics is not for the immature or naïve<sup>17</sup> – and our abilities and habits, both natural and acquired, on the other.<sup>18</sup> The performance of ethical reflection, as an expression of our form of life, is itself a valuable and evaluable enterprise. It is the theoretical face of our natural, practical art. Friends, pray we do it well.

### **3. Aristotle's Naturalistic Analysis of Friendship**

In *Physics* 2.3, Aristotle sets forth his famous doctrine of the four causes, four kinds of *explanans* we can give of any being. To answer the 'What is it?' question is to cite the formal cause, which generally takes the form of a

<sup>16</sup> EN 1.6, 1106b 3.

<sup>17</sup> EN 1.4, 1095a 2 – 11. The "young" (Aristotle's term) not only lack some *quantity* of experience of the "actions that occur in life," but also the *breadth* and *quality* of cognitive ability required to see relations, analogies, and connections between concepts. Some people, Aristotle suggests, are permanently young, so the term denotes a stage of intellectual maturity rather than one's age.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* A person who pursues "each successive object as passion directs" lacks both an overarching conception of the good – with which any *course*, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, must begin with (cf. EN 1.5, 1095b 1 – 5) – and the ability to guide his behavior in light of such a conception, which is the *telos* of a course in ethics.

definition. To answer the 'What made it or brought it about?' question is to cite the efficient or moving cause, and to answer the 'Of what is it made?' question is to cite the material cause. To the question 'Why is it?' we is to cite the final cause, the *telos*. In the case of artifacts, this is, in general, the purpose or purposes in the mind of the producer, while in the case of natural beings it is the end of a series of regular changes toward which the being develops, i.e., the healthy adult of a species. Much more can be said about Aristotle's doctrine, but here, as before, we will simply point out that he later adds that, in the case of the generation of natural beings, the efficient, formal and final causes are often identical: the adult tiger (formal cause), through his action of impregnating (efficient cause) a female tiger (who contributes the material cause), brings about the generation of a new being of the same kind, another tiger (final cause).<sup>19</sup> In this section we will show that Aristotle discusses each of these causes in his analyses of friendship, and that the efficient, formal, and final causes of friendship are identical.

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<sup>19</sup> *Physics* 2.7, 198a 24 - 27; cf. *Metaphysics* 8.4, 1044a 32

Let's begin our discussion of Aristotle's naturalistic analysis of friendship by considering the following passage from the *Politics*:

Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animal is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and the inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle thinks human beings are distinct from other animals that display social behavior in two ways. First, human beings are able to conceive and distinguish reasons for acting that exceed those of pleasure and pain, namely, expediency and justice (or goodness in general). If that were all that this passage claimed, it would merely be repeating the insight already noted in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that there are "three objects of choice ... the noble, the advantageous, [and] the pleasant ...".<sup>21</sup> Second, however, unlike other animals that merely "indicate" their pleasure and pain to others, human speech "set[s] forth"

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<sup>20</sup> *Politics* 1.2, 1253a 7 - 18.

<sup>21</sup> *EN* 2.3, 1104b30-31.

expedient and good actions to others. It communicates concepts over and above exclamations.

The importance of the distinction is as follows. The pleasure or pain that animal *A* experiences cannot be directly motivating for animal *B*; at most, *A*'s pleasure or pain is *indirectly* responsible for *B*'s action – that is, insofar as *B* is able to imagine *B*'s experiencing a pleasure *similar to* (but numerically distinct from) the pleasure *A* feels. In contrast, to say that human beings can 'set forth' motives for others to consider is to say that, in the case of *goodness* in particular, the numerically identical realization that *some x is valuable* is able to directly motivate numerically distinct persons. While it is impossible to conceive of a pleasure that is not someone's pleasure, we can conceive of some non-relative property of goodness that is a real feature of an object itself. Just as I can point out to you Rilke's 'Archaic Torso of Apollo,' which exists independently of either of us, I can also point out the valuable features of the poem that you can perceive with me and which make Rilke worth reading. Such features are objective and publicly accessible, and the same features of the poem can be independently and directly motivating for each of us.

It is this 'perceiving with' "and the association of living beings who have this sense [that] make a family and a state," that is, a distinctly *human* society. As he next writes: "the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part."<sup>22</sup> To use Aristotle's own analogy, a hand is a hand really, and not merely homonymously, only when it is able to realize its characteristic functions as an integral part of the larger human system, a living body. An amputated hand is no more a hand than a blind eye is an eye (i.e., it is so in name only).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, he implies, a human being realizes her nature as a *rational* being – one who is able to deliberate and choose among reasons for action that exceed those of pleasure and pain – because she is *born into* in a linguistic community, and language informs her rationality.<sup>24</sup> There is a sense in which it is true that we *become* both human and social when we learn a language; one who is "unable to live [participate] in

<sup>22</sup> *Politics*, 1.2, 1253a 19.

<sup>23</sup> The eye analogy is Aristotle's own, at *De Anima* 2.1, 412a 17 – 20.

<sup>24</sup> To be precise, it is through the efficient cause of language that the *first actuality* of rationality – the capacity to consider goodness as a motivating reason-for-action – and the *second actuality* of rationality – its exercise – comes into being. Aristotle distinguishes the two levels of actuality at *De Anima* 2.1, 412a 22 – 26.

society" isn't human except homonymously, but instead is "either a beast or a god."<sup>25</sup> It follows, then, that an essential property of humanity is the ability to conceive of goodness *per se*, and with others. I take it that this is in part what Aristotle means when he writes that "justice is the bond of men in states,"<sup>26</sup> where by 'justice' he seems to mean not fairness of exchange, but "excellence entire."<sup>27</sup>

### **Eunoia: The Efficient Cause of Friendship**

The stage is now set for a naturalistic analysis of friendship. Just as we can recognize excellences in things, so too can we recognize excellences in others. This recognition, which "[originates] friendship in the way that pleasure coming through sight originates erotic passion," Aristotle calls *euvōia*.<sup>28</sup> Following a seminal article by Peter Hadreas, we can interpret *eunoia* as an allogenic "recognition of another's worthiness," an intellectual response to some feature of a person that we

<sup>25</sup> *Politics*, 1.2, 1253a 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Politics*, 1.2, 1253a 37.

<sup>27</sup> *EN*, 5.1, 1130a 10.

<sup>28</sup> *EN*, 9.5 1167a 4-5, Hadreas' translation (citation below).

find valuable.<sup>29</sup> Insofar as "desire is consequent on opinion rather than opinion on desire" - insofar as we can only desire a good that we first cognize - *eunoia* is both the condition for the possibility and the efficient cause of the affection we may feel for another person.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Formal Cause of Friendship: A Definition**

By itself, *eunoia* is not friendship, else we would have to call my affectionless recognition across time and space that Jimmy Hendrix was a great guitar player, friendship. Yet that's absurd, since Jimmy doesn't (and can't) know or love me in return. If we reflect on such facts, says Aristotle, we can determine a set of necessary conditions for friendship. The fact that neither Jimmy nor my coffee can recognize or reciprocate my love eliminates them as possible objects of my friendly regard. As Aristotle says, "it would surely be ridiculous to wish wine well; if one

<sup>29</sup> Peter Hadreas, "Euvouia: Aristotle on the Beginning of Friendship," *Ancient Philosophy*, 15 (2), 1995: 393-401. This is Hadreas' preferred rendering (p. 398).

<sup>30</sup> It need not be the case that the excellence we recognize in another is *virtue*: Aristotle's own example is of a spectator recognizing the skill, a *techne*, of an athlete (at *EN* 9.5, 1166b 35, and again at 1167a 19-20). In fact, Aristotle will distinguish the kinds of friendship precisely according to the various ways we conceive of the goodness of others.

wishes anything for it, it is that it may keep."<sup>31</sup> Yet it is not merely the fact that neither Jimmy nor my coffee are alive that excludes them from being my friends, for it is quite possible for me to love living persons from afar, as it were, without this constituting friendship. To my chagrin, though I appreciate Jon Heder's 'skills' in the movie *Napoleon Dynamite*, Jon Heder is not my friend. Nor would Jon Heder be my friend if he someday read this dissertation and appreciated my philosophical skills, any more than Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedick would be lovers if they never saw through their verbal banter to the affection that lay beneath it in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Affection must be both mutual and mutually known if it is to count as *philia*. To return to Aristotle:

... *eunoia* when it is reciprocal [is] friendship. Or must we add 'when it is recognized'? For many people have *eunoia* to those whom they have not seen but judge to be good or useful; and one of these might return this feeling. These people seem to bear *eunoia* to each other; but how could one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings?<sup>32</sup>

It seems, then, that friendship is limited to those living beings - for all we know, only humans - who are able to recognize and love some excellence in each other and who are able to know of each other's love. When these

<sup>31</sup> EN 8.2, 1155b 30-1.

<sup>32</sup> EN 8.2, 1155b 33 - 1156a 3.

conditions are reciprocated, Aristotle says, we have the beginnings of a formal definition of friendship. He formulates the concept this way: a human relationship is a friendship only if

1. Each person recognizes some excellence in the other person;
2. Each person wishes well (some good) to the other person, for their own sake, in respect to that excellence recognized in (1); and
3. Both (1) and (2) are reciprocally known.<sup>33</sup>

(1) and (3) have already been discussed. (2) means that the good I wish for a friend must be based on, and because of, the excellence in virtue of which I love him. For example, if the excellence that attracts me to a person is his dancing skill, I wish him to retain these skills because they are good for him to possess.

To these *internal conditions* of friendship Aristotle adds two *external conditions* which, taken with the internal conditions, are jointly sufficient for friendship:

<sup>33</sup> EN 8.2, 1156a 3 – 5: "To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing *eunoia* and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons," e.g., pleasure, advantage, or the good.

4. The relationship has developed over a sufficient period of time.

5. The people have become familiar (been found lovable and trustworthy) to each other.<sup>34</sup>

Aristotle explains the addition of the latter set of conditions by arguing that "those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they are both loveable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not."<sup>35</sup> In other words, (4) and (5) specify the 'solidity' or 'depth,' of the satisfaction of (1) - (3). Without such conditions, as Aesop's man who sold his winter coat too early found out, a swallow would a summer make,<sup>36</sup> and we would be absurdly committed to calling new bar-buddies and compatible freshman roommates friends. The acquisition of knowledge, Aristotle argues elsewhere,

<sup>34</sup> EN 8.3, 1156b 26-30. Fundamentally, the conditions differ insofar as the external conditions are antecedent causal conditions which, if lacking, make forming a new friendship impossible, or make the continuation of a friendship extremely difficult, whereas the internal conditions concern the nature of the relation, or natural kind.

<sup>35</sup> EN 8.3, 1156b 30-2.

<sup>36</sup> Cited by Aristotle, EN 1.7, 1098a 17-19: "One swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy."

requires not merely *experience* of the other's excellent qualities but also an *understanding* of the causes - in this case, the character - of the other person. Such knowledge of necessity develops over time. Hence a non-negligible period of time spent together in shared activities is requisite for trust to develop and the other's lovability to be confirmed.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Final Cause of Friendship**

Aristotle opens and closes the *EN*'s books on friendship with the assertion that friendship is both necessary and noble. Necessary for what, and how is it noble? While books 2 - 7 of the *EN* are dedicated to the *internal* necessary conditions of *eudaimonia* - the possession of the moral virtues and *phronesis* - books 8 and 9 present friendship not merely as one external good among others, but as an activity whose particular aims are themselves

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* 1.1, 981a 27-9: "For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others [wise persons of knowledge and understanding] know the 'why' and the cause." Though this passage discusses the nature of theoretical knowledge, it also provides a suitable description of the knowledge of others required for friendship, namely, *that such-and-such is lovable because he is virtuous*. Without this knowledge the level of trust we give our friends would be unfounded. The practical knowledge of *how* to make such judgments (including what facts about people are relevant to the judgment that a person is loveable, and which are not) is a function of our intellectual maturity and moral character.

constitutive and enabling of the good life as such.

Friendship is Aristotle's primary *external* condition for happiness, and thus follows its necessity and nobility, for happiness is noble.<sup>38</sup> This can be seen more clearly if we investigate the connection between friendship and *eudaimonia*.

*Eudemonia*, Aristotle argues, is a kind of activity, and this activity is the actualization of the capacity human beings have to reason:

If happiness is activity [rather than a state or a passion], it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest excellence; and this will be that of the highest thing in us. ... That this activity is contemplative we have already said.<sup>39</sup>

Aristotle gives us several analogies in book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to help us understand his argument. Just as a person is most properly said to be a harpist while she is playing, and an organic body is most properly said to be a body when it is living, so too is a human being most properly said to be a human when exercising her rational faculty: what makes something a member of natural kind x is its displaying – the actuality of – capacities of a certain sort. This way of individuating natural kinds is

<sup>38</sup> It is one among the external goods needed for happiness. Cf. Kant, *GW* 1, for whom happiness is good but not noble.

<sup>39</sup> *EN* 10.7, 1177a 13 – 17.

now known as Aristotle's Functional account of natural kinds:

- Functional Determination Thesis: "An individual  $a$  is a member of a kind  $K$  just in case  $a$  manifests the capacities essential to members of  $K$ ."<sup>40</sup>

This thesis includes or excludes something as a member of a species based on that thing's ability to exemplify characteristic activities of a specific sort. In other words, the what-it-is-to-be human is identified by our rational activities just as the what-it-is-to-be a knife is identified by cutting. Since Aristotle further identifies a thing's function with its *telos*, he can treat the characteristic activity or function, the nature, and the end of a natural kind as identical: *eudaimonia* is the excellence of that sort of rational activity by which we identify human beings as such as well as that end towards which human beings naturally direct their actions. Insofar as Aristotle argues both in *EN* 1.7 and later in *EN* 10.7 that the human function is rational activity or activity involving reason, engaging in rational activity well is not

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<sup>40</sup> Christopher Shields, *Classical Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2003): p. 139. Shields refers us to *Meteorologica* 390a 10 - 15; *Generation of Animals* 734b 24 - 31; and *Politics* 1253a 19 - 25.

what makes a person happy as a result or consequence, but is constitutive as such of human happiness – just as playing well is what makes someone a good harpist.<sup>41</sup>

These three descriptions of happiness – as, under different formalities, at once our activity, our being, and our end – are treated as identical throughout *EN* 9.9. In the ‘self-awareness’ argument, for instance, Aristotle argues that

for human beings [life] is defined by the capacity for perception and understanding. Every capacity refers to an activity, and a thing is present [i.e., exists] to its full extent in its activity. Hence living to its full extent would seem to be perceiving or understanding. ... and living is choiceworthy, for a good person most of all, since being is good and pleasant for him ... therefore just as his own being is choiceworthy for him, his friend’s being is choiceworthy for him in the same or similar way.

“Being,” defined by its activity, can be “choiceworthy,” or the object of an action, only if our being becomes more actual the better it exhibits – is excellent at – its characteristic activity. We should not make the mistake of thinking that, for Aristotle, existence determines essence,

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *EN* 10.7 1179a 28 – 33: “[The intellect] would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of himself but that of something else. ... for man, therefore, the life according to intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest.”

as Sartre thinks, but it should be clear that our manner of existence (a) realizes our essence and that (b) our manner of existing both is (1) an object of our choice and has (2) a normative end. Some ways of living will fail to realize the level of excellence or virtue of which the human essence makes possible for human beings. Therefore ethics is about a "choice of lives" as Plato says at *Republic*: that is what it means to say, as we did at the beginning, that virtue is both a natural and a made thing.

Let us return our attention to friendship. Aristotle completes *EN* 9.9 by writing that,

whatever existence [being] means for each class of men, whatever [end] it is for whose sake they value life, in that [activity] they wish to occupy themselves with their friends.<sup>42</sup>

Once again, the sort of activity we make our end is constitutive of our accidental being, and we become persons defined accidentally by the lives we lead, that is, by our characters. People disagree about what activities are constitutive of the best life, and Aristotle thinks some get it wrong. Yet whatever we think *eudaimonia* consists

<sup>42</sup> *EN* 1172a 1 - 3. That these (being, end, activity) are treated as identical here might be explained by reference to Aristotle's ability to conceive one and the same activity, under different descriptions, either as a potentiality of a being or as a first or second actuality of that being, as he does with *life* at *DA* 2.1.

in, insofar as it is an activity rather than a possession (like a quarter in the pocket), friendship enables it.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Aristotle argues that a friend is (1) instrumentally good insofar as he (a) facilitates *eudaimonia* by providing opportunities for exercising the virtues and by providing support in misfortune,<sup>44</sup> (b) renders the rational activity of which we're capable more continuous,<sup>45</sup> and is (2) intrinsically good insofar as the friend (c) makes that which is most desired for its goodness - a life exhibiting virtue - both more pleasant in itself and more choiceworthy, "just as the musician enjoys fine melodies and is pained by bad ones."<sup>46</sup> To use another Aristotelian analogy, a friend is a microcosm of human community to you, mirroring in his being the contributions the family, village and *polis* make to human life in general, as discussed in *Politics* 1.2: to live, to flourish, and to flourish *finely*.

<sup>43</sup> EN 9.9, 1169b 29 – 32: "For we said at the beginning that happiness is a kind of activity; and clearly activity comes into being, and does not belong [to someone all the time], as a possession does."

<sup>44</sup> EN 9.11, 1171a 22 – 23.

<sup>45</sup> EN 1170a 5 – 8.

<sup>46</sup> EN 1170a 10 – 11; cf. the same point again at 1170b 8 – 19. These three theses about the value of friendship in EN 9.9 both echo and modify the ways in which friendship is said to be good in EN 8.1.

That the final cause of friendship is to enable us to achieve *eudaimonia* can be confirmed in four ways. First, Aristotle says in *EN* 9.4, the marks by which friendship is defined are also found in "the good man's relation to himself," and the good man alone is happy.<sup>47</sup> Second, this view accords with Aristotle's assertion in *EN* 10.7 that while the wise man's contemplation of truth is the most self-sufficient of all human activities, he "can perhaps [contemplate truth] better if he has fellow-workers."<sup>48</sup> Third, in both *EN* 9.9 and in a corresponding passage of the *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle argues that the self-consciousness or self-knowledge required for happiness is (perhaps only) achievable through the activity of friendship.<sup>49</sup> Finally, mirroring both the self-consciousness argument of *EN* 9.9 and the assertion in *EN* 10.7 that contemplation is happiness, Aristotle asserts that the blessed person needs, as a condition of that happiness, "to be conscious of his

<sup>47</sup> *EN* 9.4, 1166a 1 – 29.

<sup>48</sup> *EN* 10.7, 1177a 34.

<sup>49</sup> *EN* 9.9, 1169b 29 – 1170a 3; cf. *Magna Moralia* 2.15. John Cooper, in "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle" (*The Philosophical Review*, vol. 86 (3), 1977: pp. 290 – 315) has argued that the argument in *EN* is unsound, while the argument in *Magna Moralia* is probably sound. I think he's right. Nevertheless, the thrust of each argument is the same: perfect friendships are necessary for *eudaimonia* insofar as the good person must know that she is good and perfect friendships enable that knowledge.

friend as well, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place.”<sup>50</sup>

*Friendship most facilitates, makes most continuous, makes most pleasant, and makes most choiceworthy the activity of human excellence; about this Aristotle is most unambiguous.* It even replaces justice.<sup>51</sup> For in friendships between those who are good, whose characteristic activities most involve the sharing of thought rather than the exchange of material goods, the exchange is such that one gains without taking and gives without losing. Those who share wisdom, Aristotle implies, are lovers in the strictest sense of the term. They are, of course, philosophers.

This completes our naturalistic analysis of friendship. Two points remain. The first is simply that we can confirm that the above analysis is indeed a *naturalistic* analysis. As in the generation of any natural being, the final, formal and efficient causes of friendship are identical.

<sup>50</sup> EN 9.9, 1170b 10 – 13.

<sup>51</sup> “When men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality” (EN 8.1, 1154b 26 – 28).

In a friendship, a person's excellence, as an unmoved mover or final cause, actualizes *eunoia* (efficient cause), as beauty does desire, and gives rise to something of the same (formal) kind: "another self," an excellent person. For "from each other [friends] take the mould of the characteristics they approve."<sup>52</sup> Second, however, we can decide on our ends, including the ends of friendship, even to the extent of confusing the result of the activity with its aim. Hence Aristotle must also discuss derivative forms of friendship - relationships that share the form, but not the natural end, of the activity - and the ways in which such relationships enable happiness, though deficiently, and deviate from justice. To this discussion we now turn.

#### **4. Aristotle's Normative Analysis of Friendship**

One of Aristotle's stated goals in *EN* 8.1-4 is to determine "whether there is one species of friendship or more than one."<sup>53</sup> While clearly asserting that there are

<sup>52</sup> *EN* 9.12, 1172a 13 - 14.

<sup>53</sup> *EN* 1155b 11 - 12. This is no small matter, since "depending on how this question is answered, one gets a very different view of the character of the three forms of friendship Aristotle distinguishes," as Michael Pakaluk argues in *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics Books VIII and IX, Translation with a Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 62. Other writers who have addressed this

three forms of friendship, Aristotle nevertheless concludes that the term 'friendship' is said of the three in a somewhat equivocal manner. One kind is called friendship "in the proper sense" and "without qualification," while the other two are called friendships "by similarity" to or "through a resemblance" to the first, and are thus called friendships "incidentally" rather than without qualification.<sup>54</sup> Complicating the matter is the fact that although Aristotle says that, in accord with common usage, the term 'friendship' applies to all three kinds of relations,<sup>55</sup> he also states that friendships of two sorts are "less truly [friendships]" in comparison with "the truest friendship," which is friendship founded on and between "the good."<sup>56</sup> This is important. As I hope to make clear in this section, Aristotle's distinction between the three kinds of friendship is not merely of taxonomic importance, but also has normative consequences insofar as

problem in some detail include Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) and Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), in addition to the authors cited below.

<sup>54</sup> EN 1157a 30 – 1157b 4.

<sup>55</sup> "Men apply the names of friends even to those whose motive is utility ... and to those who love each other for the sake of pleasure ... Therefore we too ought perhaps to call such people friends" (EN 1157a 26 – 9).

<sup>56</sup> EN 8.3, 1157a 14 and 1157b 25, respectively.

the difference between the kinds of friendship imply functional differences in the ability of each kind of friendship to realize the *telos* of friendship as such.

### **The Problem**

To repeat: Aristotle defines friendship as:

1. Each person recognizes some excellence in the other person;
2. Each person wishes well (some good) to the other person, for their own sake, in respect to that excellence recognized in (1); and
3. Both (1) and (2) are reciprocally known.
4. The relationship has developed over a sufficient period of time.
5. The friends have become familiar (been found lovable and trustworthy) to each other.

After advancing a truncated version of the above definition in *EN* 8.2, in 8.3 Aristotle distinguishes three ways in which persons might be friends based on the ways in which a thing can be loved:

Now since these causes [of love, i.e., the good, the pleasant and the useful (1155b 16 – 17)] differ in species, so do the types of loving and types of

friendship. Hence friendship has three species, corresponding to the three objects of love. For each object of love has a corresponding type of mutual loving, combined with awareness of it, and those who love each other wish goods to each other in so far as they love each other.<sup>57</sup>

Essentially, Aristotle is pointing out that *good* – the ‘excellence’ referred to in (1) – is multivocalic, or said in many ways, and that these ways individuate the various forms *philia* can take. Since there are three ways in which we can understand the good, there are three corresponding forms of friendship. These have come to be known as ‘perfect friendship,’ or friendships of the good, ‘pleasure friendship,’ and ‘utility friendship.’ However, Aristotle goes on to further explain these kinds of friendship, and this complicates the interpretation of the relation between the three forms of friendship.

There are three primary ways of interpreting Aristotle’s definition of friendship. Following Pakaluk, we can distinguish between *strict definition*, in which the *definiens* “indicates characteristics that occur in the same way in the things that fall within its scope,” and *schematic definition*, in which the *definiens* “indicates characteristics that are widely variable across the things that fall under its scope,” and this “perhaps because it

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<sup>57</sup> EN 8.3, 1156a 6 – 9.

indicates few uniformities in the *definienda*.<sup>58</sup> It's also possible that the three forms are called 'friendship' via a *pros hen* equivocation, which occurs when a term has different senses and all of these senses are dependent on a single, central sense of the term. I will explain and criticize the first two interpretations before advocating the third.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Strict and Schematic Interpretations of Aristotle's Definition of Friendship**

Those who argue that the definition is a strict one assert that the well-wishing in (2) is in every kind of friendship *for the sake of the beloved*, and is therefore disinterested, although such well-wishing is expressed in different ways in the various kinds of friendships. Hence, the proponent of a "strict interpretation" of Aristotle will argue that, for any friendship between Adam and Eve on the grounds of some good *P* (where *P* denotes goodness *simpliciter*, usefulness or pleasantness),

- Strict Interpretation: Adam loves Eve for the sake of Eve because Eve has *P*.

<sup>58</sup> Pakaluk, p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> See the section entitled, "Friendship and Pros Hen Equivocation" below for discussion of this third alternative.

On the strict interpretation, this formula is true of all three kinds of friendships. John Cooper is a proponent of this position. He holds that Adam loves Eve for the sake of Eve "in consequence of recognizing [her] as someone" who bears  $P$  "independently of consideration of their [Adam's] own welfare or pleasure."<sup>60</sup> In other words, the function of  $P$  in the formula is to set a limit on the ground in virtue of which a person is loved: "in wishing someone well, for his own sake, because he is pleasant or advantageous, one's first commitment is to his retention of the property of pleasantness or advantageousness, and any good one wishes him to have, for his own sake, must be compatible with the retention of that special property under which, as his friend, one wishes him well in the first place."<sup>61</sup>

Given the widespread acceptance of this interpretation, it's worth taking a moment to examine the primary argument for it. Cooper favors the strict interpretation because we would otherwise be committed to the thesis that pleasure and utility-friendships are wholly self-centered and, correlatively, that only perfect friends can have

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<sup>60</sup> John Cooper, "Aristotle on Friendship," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 311.

<sup>61</sup> Cooper 1980, p. 313.

friendships that are not wholly self-centered.<sup>62</sup> This view is too "harsh" and "depressing" - by which Cooper seems to mean too elitist - and so he suggests an alternative account:<sup>63</sup>

6. The efficient cause of friendship is the type of property one *conceives* the other to have, and not their actual properties: e.g., the friend understood *qua* pleasant, advantageous, or virtuous.
7. The other person need not be conceived as a perfect instance of this type to be conceived as an instance of this type: "the friend need not be thought to be pleasant or advantageous in every way or every context, but only in *some*, in order for the friendship to exist."
8. Therefore, "what gives a friendship its character as a friendship of a particular kind is the state of mind of the partners - their intentions toward and their conceptions of one another," and "this may perfectly well - indeed, typically will - involve a very limited and partial view of him as" an instance

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<sup>62</sup> Cooper 1980, p. 305.

<sup>63</sup> Cooper 1980, p. 305. All quotations in the following reconstruction are taken from pp. 306-7.

of a type, at least in the 'deficient' kinds of friendship.

Let's call (8) the *partial properties view*, namely, that a "partial view" of someone (in the manner spelled out in (7)) as an instance of a type of friendship is sufficient for someone's being an instance of that type of friend.

Cooper goes on:

9. The partial properties view can be extended to virtue-friendships.

10. Therefore, while some (probably rare) friendships may involve the recognition of complete and perfect virtue (e.g., friendship among "moral heroes"), most virtue friendships probably involve the recognition of some isolated and imperfect good qualities.

The remainder of Cooper's article primarily involves support for (9) on the grounds of analogy and textual extrapolation. However, (9) cannot be correct. Aristotle's 'Unity of Virtues' thesis of *EN* 6.12-13 holds that practical wisdom is necessary and sufficient for moral virtue.<sup>64</sup> This entails, Aristotle argues, the impossibility

<sup>64</sup> In *EN* 6.12, Aristotle argues that insofar as all reasoning, including practical reasoning, involves as a "starting point" that such-and-such is to be valued, "and this is not evident except to the good man," that "it is

of recognizing excellences which are recognized as and known to be "limited in their goodness and/or conjoined with other not so good, or even positively bad personal characteristics," as Cooper describes partial properties.<sup>65</sup> Further, there's an important difference between pleasure and virtue: whereas pleasure is a natural but non-necessary and non-exclusive effect of excellence, virtue is not a detachable effect of good character. Rather, virtue is constitutive of good character. For Aristotle, there is no 'partial' view of Adam's virtue apart from the complete constitution of his character. "It is impossible," Aristotle says, "to be practically wise without being good."<sup>66</sup> So there can be no Aristotelian analogy between

impossible to be practically wise without being good" (1144a31 – 37). For this reason, he argues in 6.13 that it is impossible "that the excellences exist in separation from each other" (1144b 32 – 33): if practical wisdom (the 'starting point' of 6.12) is a necessary and sufficient condition for moral virtue, than given one moral virtue, one has practical wisdom, and if one has practical wisdom, then one has all of the moral virtues. And thus, as Aristotle puts the point at 1144b 35 – 1145a 3, "This [separation of excellences] is possible in respect of the natural excellences [such as being brawny but not handsome], but not in respect of those in respect of which a man is called without qualification good; for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the excellences."

<sup>65</sup> Cooper 1980, p. 307.

<sup>66</sup> EN 6.12, 1144a 36.

pleasurable properties and virtue, and thus Cooper's interpretation will not do.

Alternately, those who think that Aristotle's view of friendship is schematic argue that the well-wishing in (2) is for the sake of the beloved only in friendships based on the good, while the well-wishing is for the sake of pleasantness or utility in the other two forms of friendship. Hence, the proponent of a schematic interpretation holds that the following holds for the three forms of friendship,

- Schematic Interpretation: Adam values *P* and loves Eve as a provider of *P* for the sake of *P*,

while importantly noting that in the case of perfect friendships, *P* is identical to, or an essential property of, Eve. Michael Pakaluk takes this view, and argues that, in pleasure and utility friendships, we cannot say that "the love of each friend correlates with the other *human being*, since there are instances of the former which are not for the latter - obviously, when the man who is loved is a bad man and known by the lover to be so."<sup>67</sup> The contrast of deficient loves with perfect friendship becomes clearest when "Aristotle provides us with a description of

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<sup>67</sup> Pakaluk, pp. 69 - 70.

love for another where the correlative *is* precisely stipulated as being *the man ...*<sup>68</sup> Pakaluk appears to base his argument on solid textual grounds: Aristotle says that "those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other," and "so too with those who love each other for the sake of pleasure ..." <sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, there are two problems with Pakaluk's account. First, it makes friends fungible. This makes Aristotle's remarks about the special duties of friendship incoherent. It cannot be in terms of Eve's *being a provider of P* that I gain (or lose?) the friend-based obligations toward her or display any of the 'marks of friendship' towards her. If my commitment is to pleasure or utility, and the 'friend' were only a provider of *P* and had no value except as a provider of *P*, then he would a mere means to *P*, and I would have no duties to him as such - just as I have no duties to my car. Second, this account at worst makes the fact that it is the person herself that is loved in perfect friendship completely accidental to the relationship, which is counterintuitive. The object of my affection is *Eve*, not the formality under which I find her

<sup>68</sup> Pakaluk, pp. 69 - 70.

<sup>69</sup> EN 8.3, 1156a 10 - 12.

loveable; hence this account confuses our motives for loving and the object of our love.<sup>70</sup> At best Pakaluk's account admits that the person is the object of love in perfect friendships as a logical possibility, whereas Aristotle seems to think that this feature of perfect friendship is essential, and an important reason why perfect friendships are more valuable than other kinds of friendship.

### **Friendship and Pros Hen Equivocation**

Happily, the strict/schematic distinction does not exhaust the possible interpretations of the relations between the three kinds of friendship. Aristotle himself suggests that the three kinds are related via *pros hen* equivocation in *Eudemian Ethics* 7.2.

It is impossible for all to come under one definition. The remaining alternative, therefore, is that in one sense only the primary kind [is friendship], in another sense, all are, neither homonymously, i.e., having a chance relation to each other, but having a relation to one thing.<sup>71</sup>

Until recently many scholars rejected the *Eudemian* account of the relation between the three kinds of friendship as

<sup>70</sup> As Aristotle points out at *EN* 8.3, 1156a 17 – 19: "Hence these [lower] friendships as well [as the friends] are coincidental, since the beloved is loved not in so far he is who he is, but in so far as he provides some good or pleasure."

<sup>71</sup> *EE* 7.2, 1236b 23 – 36.

either identical to or sufficient for the relation between the three kinds of friendship Aristotle describes as 'resemblance' in the *EN*.<sup>72</sup> Julie Ward, however, has recently argued that it is possible to account for the relation among the three kinds of friendship in terms of a *pros hen* equivocation if we pay careful attention to the numerous ways in which terms can be so related.<sup>73</sup>

Without going into the fine details of Ward's argument, her account of Aristotle's doctrine of *pros hen* equivocation is the following. In the *Categories*, Aristotle argues that things are named *univocally* if they share both a name and a definition, while things are named *equivocally* if they share a name but not a definition.

<sup>72</sup> So says Julie Ward, "Focal Reference in Aristotle's Account of *Philia*," *Apeiron* 28 (1995): pp. 183-205. Ward points in particular to G.E.L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle," reprinted in *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986), pp. 180-99. Following Owen in doubting the sufficiency of a *pros hen* interpretation of the forms of friendship are W.W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle's Analysis of Friendship: Function and Analogy, Resemblance, and Focal Meaning," *Phronesis* 20 (1975): pp. 51-62; A.D.M. Walker, "Aristotle's Account of Friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Phronesis* 24 (1979), pp. 180-96; and A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Aristotle and Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>73</sup> Ward's primary thesis is that, by following Owen, scholars have artificially limited themselves to one conception of focal reference (*pros hen* equivocation) on the basis of which they reject its application to the *EN* account of friendship, although others are available and more appropriate.

Conceptually straddling this distinction is the idea of *pros hen* equivocation, in which the 'meanings' of a set of terms may be different while bearing 'reference' to or being derived from some one thing which is ontologically or logically prior to them - prior in being or prior in definition, respectively.<sup>74</sup> Aristotle's most famous use of the ontological version of *pros hen* equivocation occurs in the *Metaphysics'* assertion that "being is spoken of in many ways, but with relation to one thing and a certain nature, and not homonymously."<sup>75</sup> He goes on to assert that non-substantial existents are called 'existents' insofar as their existence is dependent on the ontologically prior-in-being *substance*, as modifications, relations, qualities, destructions or privations of substance.<sup>76</sup> Hence, substance is not only logically prior to its accidents (since there is no accident that is not an accident of some substance), but is also a more perfect instance of 'existent.' As Aristotle says, substance is being in an unqualified or absolute sense rather than in a qualified sense.

<sup>74</sup> *Cat.* 1, 1a 1-12. I borrow terms 'meaning' and 'reference' from Aquinas, who uses them to describe *pros hen* equivocation in his commentaries on the *EN* and the *Met*. This list of the kinds of priorities isn't exhaustive; cf. *Cat.* 12, 14a 27 - 14b 24, and *Met.* 5.11, 1018b - 14.

<sup>75</sup> *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003a 33 - 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003b 5 - 10.

It is also possible for a term to be logically prior to another without the things denoted by the terms standing in a relation of ontological dependence. For example, Aristotle often points to the fact that we can call, say, the practical knowledge or art of the doctor, her diagnosis of a patient, and a scalpel all 'medical,' and that saying this of each thing gives us important information about the kind of thing we are dealing with. The scalpel is a knife used by a medical doctor, while the doctor's diagnosis proceeds from the practice of her medical art. Of course, we do not call anyone who wields a scalpel a doctor, nor everyone who gives a diagnosis of sickness. Rather, we speak of a medical mind, and body, and instrument, and operation, but [we apply the term] properly to that which is primary. The primary is that of which the definition exists in all, for example, a medical instrument is that which a medical man would use, but the definition of the instrument is not in the definition of the medical man.<sup>77</sup>

The definition of medical doctor need not appear explicitly in the definition of her tools or activities; what is important is that these uses of 'medical' are posterior to the primary use of the term as said of doctors.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *EE* 7.2, 1236a 19 - 22.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003b 1 - 3.

The kinds of friendship appear to be related in the logical sense of *pros hen* equivocation just discussed. Ward gives three reasons for thinking this. The first is that both the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics* distinguish between what is good *absolutely* or *without qualification* and what is good *relatively* or *with qualification*.<sup>79</sup> For example, what is good for a healthy body is good absolutely, while surgery is good only for the sick; likewise, what is pleasant to the good adult person is what is good without qualification, while what is pleasant to children, animals and the vicious is only good with qualification.<sup>80</sup> In a more general sense, as Ward suggests,

In adverting to the fully functioning thing that *fs* to determine what will count as a standard for *f*, he [Aristotle] shows that he has a normative sense of what is good or pleasant ... [What is 'absolutely good' implicitly refers] to what is good in relation to the standard for each category.<sup>81</sup>

What is absolutely good for something, then, is good relative to that thing's natural kind.

Second, although Aristotle says that the good considered both with and without qualification can be a reason for

<sup>79</sup> *EE* 1235b 31 – 2; the healthy vs. sick example is found at 1235b 33 – 5. The same distinction is made at *EN* 7.12, 1152b 26 – 27.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *EN* 3.4, 1113a 31 – 34 and 7.13, 1153a 31 – 32.

<sup>81</sup> Ward, p. 187.

friendship,<sup>82</sup> he also argues that, properly speaking, pleasure and advantage are called *good* relative to and posterior to what we call good in the primary sense of *excellence of function*. Clearly, what is useful is useful as a means to some other good and is posterior to good in precisely that sense.<sup>83</sup> Pleasure, as Aristotle tells us in *EN* 7.12 – 13, is a natural accompaniment or epiphenomenon of unimpeded natural activity.<sup>84</sup> Hence, pleasure cannot be the primary sense of the good insofar as it is a normal effect of natural functioning, and it is the functioning which provides the standard of goodness for a natural kind.

Finally, Aristotle tells us in numerous places that the good is what moves us as an object of desire,<sup>85</sup> and *Met.* 1072a27 and 1072b1-4 tell us that this is a form of final causality: the object of love moves without being moved. Furthermore, to say of something that it is 'loveable' is to predicate of it an intentional, dispositional property, since to say of something that it is 'loveable' is not merely to state a relation between a lover, Adam, and some

<sup>82</sup> *EE* 1236a 11 – 12; *EN* 8.2, 1155b 21 – 22.

<sup>83</sup> *EN* 8.2, 1155b 21 – 21.

<sup>84</sup> *EN* 7.12, 1153a 14 – 15; 7.13, 1153b 8 – 12. The explanation of this lies in the fact that "every excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well" (*EN* 2.6, 1106a 15 – 16).

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, *EE* 1236a11-12, as well as *EN* 2.4.

property *P*, but rather to say of Eve that Adam is disposed to conceive of her as *P* and to be moved by her in respect to *P*.<sup>86</sup>

It follows, then, that the kinds of friendship differ – and are focally related – by the way in which they conceive as good the person they are moved by. In perfect friendships, a friend is moved by the friend conceived and loved *qua* good, or as good absolutely, while in the derivative forms of friendship, a friend is moved by the friend conceived and loved with qualification, that is, *qua* pleasant or *qua* useful. In every case it is a *friend* – a person who mutually recognizes and reciprocates our affection – who so moves us, even while the cases are individuated by their ends. Hence, Ward correctly argues, “the secondary definitions [of friendship] rely on the primary definition but add further specifications as to what kind of good the specific friendship is directed.” In short, the situation is this:

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<sup>86</sup> As Pakaluk argues, p. 59, commenting on EN 1155b 25 – 6: “The distinction between being apparently and actually good or pleasant ‘will make no difference,’ since something that is actually loveable to someone, but does not appear to him to be so, cannot be loved by him at all, and anything that appears to be loveable is loved only as appearing to him to be actually loveable.”

- Perfect friendship = "mutual and recognized affection for the sake of the unqualified good."
- Pleasure friendship = "mutual and recognized affection for the sake of the pleasant *qua* good."
- Utility Friendship = "mutual and recognized affection for the sake of the useful *qua* good."<sup>87</sup>

In every case of friendship, then, it is the conception of the good (either with or without qualification) that is recognized and is the object of choice, although only in perfect friendship does the good *absolutely* and the good *for us* match up. Each person in a perfect friendship, then,

is both good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and those of others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or alike.<sup>88</sup>

The three kinds of friendship are not related as species to genus, as Cooper seems to think; nor is the definition of friendship simply schematic in the way that Pakaluk thinks

<sup>87</sup> Ward, p. 198 (definitions) and p. 199 (previous quotation).

<sup>88</sup> EN 7.3, 1156b 12 - 17.

it is.<sup>89</sup> Rather, it is in consequence of the differing but focally related aetiology (causes) of the kinds of friendship that the extrinsic conditions of friendship (such as the amount of time spent together, in shared activities) will differ in degree, and likewise the symptomology (marks) of friendship differ across the kinds.<sup>90</sup>

That brings us full circle to the normative analysis of friendship. The deficient forms of friendship manifest themselves as less perfect enablers of *eudaimonia*. They are less pleasurable, less just, less beneficent, shorter in duration, more prone to slander, less self-sufficient and more prone to the variations of fortune.<sup>91</sup> Such friendships are not unqualified goods in all circumstances, as are perfect friendships.<sup>92</sup> But if we recognize that

<sup>89</sup> Pakaluk, p. 61. Pakaluk wrongly thinks that in friendship "characteristics ... are widely variable across the things that fall under its scope" (p. 61).

<sup>90</sup> Aquinas recognized this point: "the good as such, the pleasurable, and the useful ... do not differ in kind as three equal species of a genus but are classified by priority and posterity," and thus "since acts are diversified according to the difference of objects, the types of love will differ in kind according to these three." *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.I. Litzinger (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1993): §1563 and ff.

<sup>91</sup> Indeed, such differences seem to be a main theme of EN 8.4 – 6 and book 9.

<sup>92</sup> EN 9.11, 1171b 28.

friendships of the good involve persons who are good, and who in virtue of their goodness enable one another's good, the opposite must also be true: those who are bad tend to seek those who are bad, and by associating with the bad facilitate their own viciousness. Aristotle himself draws such a contrast:

The friendship of bad men turns out to be an evil thing (for because of their instability they unite in bad pursuits, and besides they become evil by becoming like each other), while the friendship of good men is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould of the characteristics they approve.<sup>93</sup>

Insofar as the good and the pleasant have the characteristic of ends, it is probably the case that most persons who err in friendship do so by overvaluing the importance of pleasure in their relationships. As a consequence, such people many times begin to treat themselves and their friends unjustly - like things that exist only to provide pleasure, as Kant would say. As Aristotle says, "perhaps they should look out for friends who, being pleasant, are also good, and good for them too;

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<sup>93</sup> EN 9.12, 1172a 7 - 14.

for so they will have all the characteristics that friends should have.”<sup>94</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have argued that Aristotle provides both a natural and normative analysis of friendship. As a natural phenomenon, human friendship has as its *telos* the enabling of *eudaimonia* for beings who are essentially social, rational, and embodied beings. Normatively, however, we can set for ourselves purposes for friendship that approximate this natural end more or less well, and are thus more or less well suited to realizing the functional aims of friendship itself. Every particular friendship – like every particular person – is, at different levels of analysis, both a natural and a made or purposed thing.

This thesis informs the philosophical tradition that follows, and our tracing of that tradition in this dissertation. Each of the philosophers we will survey thinks that friendship forms a natural kind, and that the features of this natural kind are relevant to our moral appraisal of particular friendships as we find them

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<sup>94</sup> EN 8.7, 1158a 26 – 28.

instantiated in the world – even as they differ from Aristotle as to what these features are and how they are relevant to moral philosophy. Thinkers who hold that human relationships are merely or completely artefactual we thus set aside as outside the scope of this study.<sup>95</sup>

However, insofar as our study will focus not merely on friendship, but also on its relationship to loyalty, we will next investigate Aristotle's thoughts on duties of friendship and loyalty in the *Nicomachean Ethics* before turning our attention to Aquinas, Kant, and Kierkegaard.

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<sup>95</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> century instances thinkers in this latter tradition would include Jean-Paul Sartre, Michael Foucault, and Luce Irigaray.

## CHAPTER 2. ARISTOTLE ON LOYALTY: RESCUING FALLEN FRIENDS

*"One who is just ... puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale - high, lows, and middle."*

- *Plato, Republic IV (443d)*

### Précis

In the previous chapter we discussed Aristotle's theory of friendship by focusing on its nature and its value. In this chapter we will address the practical implications Aristotle's teleological accounts of friendship and the self have for a casuistical question: what are the limits of our obligations of loyalty and beneficence towards friends who have fallen from virtue? Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which Aristotle can avoid a purely contractualist answer to these questions.

Section one will locate the concept of loyalty in Aristotle's theory of virtue. Section two will show why Aristotle's remarks about duties to fallen friends both follow from the causal explanation of friendship discussed in chapter one, and how this explanation makes his remarks morally problematic. In the remaining sections of this

chapter I will compare the ways in which Aristotle says our obligations of justice and care differ towards former friends. I will also argue for an explanation of this difference by interpreting Aristotle's notion of the self as a normative, final cause of human excellence. I will end the chapter by summarizing Aristotle's contributions to the philosophy of loyalty, as well as outline some problems with his account.

### **1. Aristotle and Loyalty**

In the Introduction, it was noted that the standard model of loyalty holds that loyalty is "a practical disposition to persist in an intrinsically valued ... associational attachment," where this attachment involves intimacy, care and willingness to take risks to secure the interests or well-being of the object of loyalty.<sup>1</sup> The objects of loyalty fall into paradigmatically natural and conventional kinds, such as friends, families, countries and professions, though these do not exhaust the classes of objects loyalties fall under.

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<sup>1</sup> See John Kleinig, "Loyalty," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/loyalty>>. Accessed 11/18/08.

Because he treats friendship as a necessary condition of *eudaimonia*, loyalty to friends clearly meets Aristotle's conditions for virtue understood as "a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it."<sup>2</sup> The standard model of loyalty, however, blends what David O'Connor calls the aetiological and symptomological levels of a virtue.<sup>3</sup> (Aetiological reflection on a virtue involves analysis of the underlying state of the appetite or emotion associated with the virtue; symptomological analysis of a virtue involves reflection on the typical kinds of acts that issue from this underlying state of character.) If we confine our analysis of loyalty to the kind of loyalty we owe to friends, loyalty aetiologically involves historically rooted and particular care of those to whom we stand in a special relation.

That loyalty involves care - active beneficence and benevolence directed towards a particular person - can be

<sup>2</sup> EN 2.6, 1107a 2; 1144b 24.

<sup>3</sup> This distinction was first used by David O'Connor, "Aetiology of Justice," in *Essays on the Foundations of Political Science*, eds. Lord and O'Connor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): pp. 136 - 164.

clearly seen in Aristotle's description of the marks of friendship. In *EN* 9.4, he argues that "the defining features of friendship that are found in friendships to one's neighbors would seem to be derived from features of friendship toward oneself," and paradigmatically so in "the decent person's relation to himself."<sup>4</sup> There are five such features:

1. Jones wishes and does goods or apparent goods to Smith for Smith's sake.
2. Jones wishes for Smith to exist and to live, for Smith's own sake.
3. Jones spends time with Smith.
4. Jones makes the same choices as Smith.
5. Jones shares in Smith's distress and enjoyment.

Marks (1), (2), and (5) clearly involve an identification of Smith's interests with Jones's at the level of Jones's affections, while items (1), (3), and (4) describe the typical actions Jones engages in as a result of his love for Smith. Jones's treatment of Smith's interests as his own transcends the purely negative ethical requirement that

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<sup>4</sup> *EN* 9.4, 1166a 1 - 3; 10 - 11.

we refrain from actions whose immediate goal harms some basic human good, i.e., what modern ethicists would call the duty of *respect*: Jones feels and does for Smith what he feels and does for no stranger, and neither this omission nor his preferential feelings and doings for Smith imply any injustice toward strangers. Friendship and loyalty thus clearly involve a positive obligation of *care*, which requires us to consider the effects of our actions on the interests of those to whom we stand in affective relations and the pursuit of what is good for those interests. Symptomologically, then, loyalty typically involves, minimally, the "maintenance of the [friendly] relationship," and maximally involves actions intended to further the interests your friend.<sup>5</sup>

Loyalty also nicely fits Aristotle's claim that a virtue lies between two extremes, an excess and a deficiency. At the aetiological level, a deficiency of loyalty is weakness of attachment, homelessness, a constantly shifting pattern of devotion and care. At the symptomological level, a deficiency in loyalty may express itself either in failures to meet one's obligations of care or in actions which

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<sup>5</sup> The distinction between the "minimal" and "maximal" demands of loyalty is George Fletcher's in *Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), pp. 8 - 9.

attack your friend's interests. The former class of actions involve neglect; the latter class involves betrayal. At the aetiological level, an excess of loyalty is unreflective and uncritical idolatry of your friend - what, at the political level is expressed by the phrase 'my country, right or wrong' - and at the symptomological level is typified by what we might call 'fanaticism.'

Although loyalty is not the "beginning of political life, a life in which interaction with others becomes the primary means of solving problems," as Fletcher says, it is a necessary condition of that life.<sup>6</sup> Reciprocal care is the primary mark of the relation between the natural ruler and the naturally ruled that Aristotle describes in *Politics* 1.2, and it is the extension of this reciprocity from the family to the stranger that makes possible the transition from the familial to the civic life and from a life of mere sufficiency to a life of leisure. It is this transition that makes a *good life* (as opposed to *mere life*) possible, as Aristotle argues in *Politics* 1.3 and again in 7.14. No human being can be stateless, unattached, without loyalties, and remain human, Aristotle implies: to be truly alienated - like Camus' character Meursault in *L'Etranger* -

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<sup>6</sup> Fletcher, p. 5.

is to be either a beast or a god.<sup>7</sup> Only one of these options is possible for man.

## 2. A Textual Puzzle

Given that the genus of loyalty is a disposition to persevere in obligations of care to those to whom we stand in a special relation, an obvious place to investigate Aristotle's notion of loyalty is in *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.13 – 9.3, where he discusses the circumstances in which one should persevere in a failing or failed relationship. Aristotle here argues that *philia* generates obligations to work for your friend's good even in spite of his loss of whatever feature he possessed that was the basis of the friendship.

Just as we think we must do kindnesses for friends more than for strangers, so also we should accord something to past friends because of the former friendship, whenever it is not excessive vice that causes the dissolution.<sup>8</sup>

This sentence ends a chapter in which Aristotle attempts to draw a fine line between a duty to 'rescue' the character of a friend gone bad and the permissibility of dissolving the relationship altogether. However, explaining and justifying the line he draws is problematic.

<sup>7</sup> *Politics*, 1.2, 1253a 25 – 30.

<sup>8</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 34 – 36.

Because loyalty arises out of our contingent affections and judgments - including *eunoia* - it is difficult to speak of persisting *obligations* of loyalty, i.e., to persist in care when love has died. As George Fletcher writes,

The way to see this is to think about disloyalty and betrayal. Betrayal is the stronger term, and it implies something more than an absence of loyalty or a shift in loyalties. ... Humans engage in such shifts when they divorce and remarry or emigrate and acquire the nationality of an adopted country. Betrayal, however, is one of the basic sins of our civilization. ... The difference between a shift in loyalty and betrayal inheres in a simple fact. Betrayal occurs only when one breaches an obligation of loyalty. A shift in loyalty represents not a breach but the extinction of the duty toward one object and its revival toward someone else.<sup>9</sup>

Here, then, is the difficulty. On the one hand, it seems profoundly *unproblematic* that we have present obligations because of past relationships. If we can be presently guilty of past wrongs, or presently under a debt of gratitude because of someone's previous generosity, there should be no problem in thinking that the fact that someone once meant something special to you can ground a present obligation of loyalty. On the other hand, insofar as Aristotle's account of friendship and care depend on a causal account of affection, he is willing to say that our obligations of loyalty can be extinguished by our friend's

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<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, p. 9 - 10.

losing the property that caused our affection for him. Certainly, Aristotle admits, former friends who are now unloved (or unlovable) may demand that we be *just* with them in virtue of debts we accrued in the former relationship.<sup>10</sup> A woman may *justly* demand that her former spouse pay child support because he is the father of their children, just as you may *justly* demand that I pay you today because I borrowed money from you yesterday. But that is quite a different demand – and a differently justified demand – than the demand for preferential care.

When Aristotle raises the problem of our obligations to continue preferential care to those we no longer love, he engages in a strange dialectic with himself:

But if we accept the friend as a good person, and then he becomes vicious, and seems so, **should** we still love him? Surely we **cannot** ...<sup>11</sup>

But if one friend stayed the same and the other became more decent and far excelled his friend in virtue, **should** the better person still treat the other as a friend? Surely he **cannot**.<sup>12</sup>

Apparently, the normative question as to whether we ought to love and care for former friends has a purely descriptive answer: we cannot be obligated to perform

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 8.9, 1160a 1 – 8.

<sup>11</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 13.

<sup>12</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 23 – 25.

impossible actions. It is in this context that Aristotle's remark that "so also we should accord something to past friends because of the former friendship, whenever it is not excessive vice that causes the dissolution," becomes difficult to explain - even if, at the level of common sense morality, it seems correct.

Let's approach the problem from a slightly different direction. Very clearly, pleasure and utility friendships do not last any longer than the exchange they involve; as Aristotle repeatedly says of such relationships, it is of their nature to be transient.<sup>13</sup> This does not imply that there are no obligations of loyalty involved in these friendships while they last, for we have clear notions sexual and commercial betrayal even against those with whom we are involved only at the level of hedonic or economic exchange, and loyalty is a necessary condition for that possibility. However, Aristotle suggests, the limits of such loyalties are identical with the limits of the relationship - the terms of the exchange.<sup>14</sup>

It is also going to be the case that in perfect friendships (of virtue or character) that the limits of

<sup>13</sup> EN 8.3, 1156a 19 - 20.

<sup>14</sup> EN 9.3, 1165b 2 - 4.

loyalty are identical with the limits of the relationship, but it is precisely because such friends exchange character that their loyalty is to something more lasting – and “virtue is a lasting thing.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Aristotle allows for the permissible dissolution of such friendships only in the case of mistaken identity – when the relationship is annulled, so to speak, on the grounds that it was never a real character friendship – or when the character of one of the friends changes so drastically as to cease to be exchangeable. This can happen in two ways. In one of these cases the friend so outstrips the other in virtue that the ending of the relationship is not so much an extinction of love as a dissolution, a growing apart, concomitant with a lessening of care and its obligations. In the other case, however, your friend falls into vice, and here Aristotle retains the obligation of loyalty to the point of irredeemability, as cited above.

Any explanation of Aristotle’s remarks must ground itself on two facts: that loyalty is generated by our affection for the object of friendly love – an ‘intrinsically valued associational attachment,’ in the words of the standard model – and that Aristotle’s explanation of the affective

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<sup>15</sup> EN 8.3, 1156b 12.

generation of such obligations is strictly causal. As Aquinas will later point out, the difference between *desire* and *love* is that love is an affection, a passive response to some excellence (in this case, *eunoia*), while desire is the active seeking to possess some good for one's own – what Aquinas calls *concupiscience*. On this model, an object's loss of the good that arouses your affection means the cessation of the affection, and the loss of the affection means the loss of the relationship and one's loyalty – precisely as Aristotle describes in the cases of dissolved friendships of pleasure and utility. One cannot care for what one does not love, just as one cannot see in the absence of light (Aristotle's metaphor for *eunoia* in *EN* 9.5); and this is perfectly consistent with the fact that we may simultaneously retain our obligations of justice to former friends since these are either contractual or general, non-contractual obligations rather than elicited and particular. However, it is precisely this lightswitch aspect of Aristotle's treatment of affection and loyalty that make his remarks about our obligations to care for the virtue of a fallen friend problematic.

In the remaining parts of this chapter I will compare the ways in which Aristotle says our obligations of justice and

our obligations of care differ towards former friends. I will also argue for an explanation of this difference that makes recourse to Aristotle's notion of the self as a normative, final cause of human excellence.

### **3. Friendship, Loyalty, and Justice**

Aristotle states that questions regarding the conduct of people toward their friends "appears to be the same as asking how they are to conduct their lives justly."<sup>16</sup> He means this quite literally, it turns out. All friendships involve an exchange of goods, i.e., the conferral and reception of benefits, and such exchanges fall under the heading of justice in *EN* Book Five. Because his discussion of the reasons disputes occur among friends and the conditions under which we may legitimately dissolve a friendship presuppose his discussion of justice, a brief review Aristotle's classification of the kinds of justice is needed before the grounds of the dissolution of friendship can be discussed.

#### **Aristotle on Justice**

Aristotle divides justice into two kinds, general and particular, and argues that there are two kinds of

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<sup>16</sup> *EN* 8.12, 1162a 31 - 2.

particular justice, distributive and rectificatory (though he also discusses a kind of justice governing purely economic transactions called justice in exchange). He also considers political justice a form of special justice.<sup>17</sup> By general justice Aristotle simply means "complete virtue to the highest degree," that is, virtue itself.<sup>18</sup> (This is in keeping with Plato's use of the term in the *Republic*.) Special justice, on the other hand, specifically relates to fairness with other people.

Distributive justice concerns the distribution of goods in proportional fairness. Because justice deals with proportions, Aristotle argues that it involves an "equality of ratios and requires at least four terms": two persons, *A* and *B*, and two goods, *C* and *D*.<sup>19</sup> Its end is fairness.

Rectificatory justice concerns making right an injury rather than the establishment of proper proportions in some exchange. Aristotle treats rectificatory justice as a zero-sum game in which one person's loss is another's gain (though he has reservations about the exactness of his

<sup>17</sup> Today we would standardly call these *distributive* and *rectificatory* justice, and justice of *acquisition*, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> *EN* 5.1, 1129b 31.

<sup>19</sup> *EN* 5.3, 1131a 33 – 1131b 9.

terminology here). Considering a case of an attacker who wounds his victim, he says that

we speak of profit ... even if that is not the proper word in some cases; and we speak of loss for the victim who suffers the wound. At any rate, when what was suffered has been measured, one part is called the victim's loss, and the other the [offender's] profit. Hence the equal is intermediate between more and less. Profit and loss are more and less in contrary ways, since more good and less evil is profit, and the contrary is loss. The intermediate area between [profit and loss], we have found, is the equal, which we say is just. Hence the just in rectification is the intermediate between loss and profit.<sup>20</sup>

Justice in exchange, finally, is primarily concerned with establishing proportional reciprocity in the economic sphere in which products are exchanged. Like the others, its end is fairness. If cobblers, carpenters, doctors and farmers are to fairly exchange their goods, they need a common measure of their products, and this common measure is a conventional stand-in for products we call 'currency.'<sup>21</sup> A just exchange would specify, in coin, the fair amount of shoes for houses.

Aristotle clearly connects his theory of friendship to his theory of justice in *EN* 8.13:

There are three types of friendship, as we said at the beginning, and within each type some friendships rest

<sup>20</sup> *EN* 5.4, 1132a 12 - 19.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *EN* 5.5, 1132b 20 - 1133b 29.

on equality, while others are in accord with superiority. For equally good people can be friends, but also a better and a worse person; and the same is true of friends for pleasure or utility, since they may be either equal or unequal in their benefits. Hence equals must equalize in loving and in the other things, because of their equality; and unequals must make the return that is proportionate to the types of superiority.<sup>22</sup>

Each of the kinds of 'disputes' among friends concerns some unjust distribution of benefits that has taken place and a demand for rectification. The disputes Aristotle initially discusses are limited to friendships of pleasure and utility, and to friendships in which the friends have dissimilar aims (for example, one aims at pleasure, one at utility). Perfect friendships, as we remarked in chapter one, would seem to be immune to such disputes. Unlike the zero-sum games of the other kinds of exchange, the exchange of virtue involves no loss on the part of the giver. Furthermore, Aristotle adds, since the partners in a perfect friendship are by definition just, "in friendships in accord with virtue, there are no accusations ... [for] the decision of the benefactor would seem to be the measure."<sup>23</sup> This is not the case with the other forms of friendship. In them, an unequal exchange is either (1) "a public service" - in effect, charity - and thus "not [an act of]

<sup>22</sup> EN 8.13, 1162a 35 - 1162b 4.

<sup>23</sup> EN 8.13, 1163a 22 - 23.

friendship, [since] the benefits from the friendship do not accord with the worth of the actions," or else (2) slavery, in which a good is forced from a person.<sup>24</sup> Both (1) and (2) ground a demand for rectification, either by gratitude or by the restoration of the good lost against one's will.

### **The Limits of Friendship**

In *EN* 9.3, Aristotle discusses the conditions under which all three kinds of friendship may be dissolved and the ways in which our obligations towards our friends change as a result. He begins with a simple case:

With friends for utility or pleasure perhaps there is nothing absurd in dissolving the friendship whenever they are no longer pleasant or useful. For they were friends of pleasure or utility; and if these give out, it is reasonable not to love.<sup>25</sup>

Aristotle is arguing that a friend's loss of that in virtue of which we found him desirable removes our motivation, our reasons for the friendship. This is a purely causal model of appetition in which *x*'s continued possession of *p* functions as a cause of *y*'s affection. It is in this context that Aristotle's analogy of lovability to the

<sup>24</sup> *EN* 8.14, 1163a 29 – 30.

<sup>25</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 2 – 5.

visible in *EN* 9.5 is pertinent: just as we do not see when the lights go out, so too do we cease loving when someone loses their lovable properties.<sup>26</sup>

But there is more to it than this. The person at  $t_2$  no longer has the kind of good to give us that we found desirable at  $t_1$ , so the terms of the exchange have changed, and hence the 'ratios' required by distributive justice have shifted as well. As Aristotle argues,

Friends quarrel when they get results different from those they want; for when someone does not get what he aims at, it is like getting nothing. ... For each person sets his mind on what he finds he requires, and this will be his aim when he gives what he gives.<sup>27</sup>

Friendships of pleasure or utility may dissolve, then, because in the absence of the good in virtue of which we originally loved the friend we no longer feel affection for him. Since *eunoia* is a necessary condition of friendship, this relationship lacks a cause requisite for friendship. There is also a consideration of justice. The proportion of exchange relative to worth involved in the friendship has ceased to be the same proportion at  $t_2$  as at  $t_1$  because one of the goods has lost the worth it had when the exchange was deemed valuable. Any obligations that remain

<sup>26</sup> *EN* 9.5, 1167a 4 – 5.

<sup>27</sup> *EN* 9.1, 1164a 14 – 22.

in the aftermath of these relationships are obligations of rectificatory justice, the casuistical treatment of which occupies *EN* 8.13 – 9.3; no obligations of care or loyalty are mentioned.

However, not all cases of a person's becoming unlovable are as simple as flipping the attraction switch off. Just as some cases of seeing are non-veridical, so too are some cases of friendship not really friendships. These are the cases Aristotle concerns himself with in *EN* 9.3. "As we said in the beginning," he writes, "friends are most at odds when they are not friends in the way they think they are."<sup>28</sup> He discusses four such cases of false-friendship:

[1] if we mistakenly suppose we are loved for our character, when our friend is doing nothing to suggest this, we must hold ourselves responsible. But [2] if we are deceived by his pretense, we are justified in accusing him ...<sup>29</sup>

But [3] if we accept the friend as a good person, and then he becomes vicious, and seems so, should we still love him? Surely we cannot ...<sup>30</sup>

But [4] if one friend stayed the same and the other became more decent and far excelled his friend in virtue, should the better person still treat the other as a friend? Surely he cannot.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 7 – 8.

<sup>29</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 9 – 12.

<sup>30</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 13.

<sup>31</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 23 – 25.

The four cases are systematically related: a friendship will become or be shown to have been a false friendship if (a) someone's reasons for loving change, as in the first two cases, or (b) one friend's character changes, as in the latter two cases. Of course, (a) is related to (b): in both kinds of changes, what changes is either the *actual* or *apparent* character of one friend or the other, and in consequence our motivation to be friends with that person ceases to obtain, as does the initial distribution of goods in the relationship.

In case (1), we are deceived by ourselves - that he loved us, for such-and-such reasons, when there is no evidence that this is so. We are thus not justified in accusing him of wrongdoing, though we may be justified in blaming ourselves for the mistake. In case (2), we are deceived by the other - that he loved us, for such-and-such reasons, when he acted as if he did. We are justified in accusing him of wrongdoing. In both cases, the friendship of character never existed as such, for the recognition of the other as lovable on the basis of virtue was not mutual. We have discovered that the *actual* relation differed from the *apparent* relation, and like a merchant who has accepted a forged coin, we were deceived in the exchange. In both

cases the deception is unjust in the distributive sense of that term – supposing one can be unjust to oneself.<sup>32</sup>

In cases (3) and (4), on the other hand, we are not initially deceived about the character of the other person – we truly believe that he loves us – but the character of one of the friends has changed for the better or for the worse. Here, the *actual* relation changes over time, including the kind of particular justice involved.

In the third case, Aristotle argues, our friendship generates obligations to “rescue” the character of the friend gone bad – a case of rectificatory justice – for “if someone can be set right, we should try harder to rescue his character than his property.”<sup>33</sup> However, if we change for the better while our friend remains the same, “as we find in friendships beginning in childhood,” we can no longer maintain the friendship insofar as we no longer share the same vision of the good; we “neither approve of the same things nor find the same things enjoyable or

<sup>32</sup> While Aristotle admits that the notion of injustice to oneself is *prima facie* ridiculous – one cannot steal one’s own belongings or commit adultery with one’s own wife – he resolves this difficulty by arguing that the notion of both friendship and injustice towards oneself can be made intelligible by saying that “someone is two or more parts.” See *EN* 9.4 1166a 36 and 5.11, 1138b 7 – 8.

<sup>33</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 19 – 20.

painful," and thus cannot share in each other's pleasures or pains or desire to share a life together.<sup>34</sup> Insofar as distributive justice depends on the proportionate equality in an exchange based on relevant differences, and "distribution that accords with worth equalizes and preserves a friendship," this fourth case has become "a public service, not a friendship."<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, Aristotle says of the fourth case, the better friend "must keep some memory of the familiarity they had. Just as we think we must do kindnesses for friends more than for strangers, so also should we accord something to past friends because of the former friendship ..." <sup>36</sup> Although it vulgarizes the relationship, it would be easy to explain this remark in terms of an economic analogy, as Aristotle suggests in *EN* 9.1:

Indeed this is how it appears in buying and selling. And in some cities there are actually laws prohibiting legal actions in voluntary bargains, on the assumption that if we have trusted someone we must dissolve the community with him on the same terms on which we formed it. The law does this because it supposes that it is more just for the recipient to fix repayment than for the giver to fix it ... the return is made in the amount fixed by the initial recipient.

Presumably, however, the price must not be what it

<sup>34</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 26, 27 - 31.

<sup>35</sup> *EN* 8.14, 1163b 12 - 14; 1163a 29.

<sup>36</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 33 - 35.

appears to be worth when he has got it, but the price he put on it before he got it.<sup>37</sup>

However, this economic analogy for friendship – in part because it vulgarizes friendship by reducing the friend to a fungible good – requires careful scrutiny. Clearly, Aristotle thinks that friendship generates obligations of particular justice between friends, some of which may only require action in consequence of a change in the real or apparent character of one of the friends in the ways mentioned above. If our friend's character has been stolen from him, we should try to rectify the theft, while if our character has changed, distributive justice requires us to adjust the exchange of goods in a manner that's fair to all concerned. That may mean cancelling the contract in cases in which the transaction was voluntary (so to speak), or dissolving the relationship when this can be done without violating a requirement of natural justice.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> EN 9.1, 1164b 12 – 22.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle denies (EN 8.14, 1163b 20 – 25), for instance, that a son can disown his father – just as a debtor cannot cancel his debt without returning what he owes, and that's impossible in this case – though a father, like a creditor, can disown his son by remitting the son's debt. No father would do this, Aristotle thinks, except to a son "who was far gone in vice," since the son is 'another self' of the father in several senses – biological, social, and ethical. Cf. EN 10.9, 1180b 5, and Elizabeth Belifore, "Family Friendships in Aristotle's Ethics," *Ancient Philosophy* 21 (1) 2001: pp. 113 – 33.

Insofar as loyalty involves honoring our special obligations to care for others, it would seem that Aristotle is partly identifying this obligation with a counterfactual extension of our usual obligations of particular justice in special relationships: since I always have an obligation to seek the well-being of my friend, this same friendship requires that if my friend were to become vicious, I would be obligated to rescue his character. Aristotle is confident that we *don't* have similar obligations to fallen friends of pleasure or utility: we may, without blame, simply take our 'business' elsewhere. An obvious question to ask at this point is why we retain obligations of loyalty in the case of a failed character friendship but not in the case of failed friendships of pleasure or utility, given that the cause of the dissolution of the friendship *in both cases* is the loss of the real or apparent good in virtue of which we gained *eunoia* for our friend.

The answer to this question, I'll argue below, lies in Aristotle's grounding of friendship in self-love, specifically in the fact that the vicious person's relation to himself mirrors the conditions under which friendships change or dissolve.

#### 4. Aristotle's Normative Self

In several places in *EN* 9, Aristotle seems to identify the self with practical reason in opposition to the other parts of the soul and in opposition to our desires in particular. His own metaphor in these passages pays more than lip service to Plato's city-soul analogy in *Republic* IV, the many-headed beast of *Republic* IX, and Plato's analogy of the soul with a charioteer in *Phaedrus*.<sup>39</sup>

[The virtuous person] seems to be a self-lover. At any rate, he awards himself what is finest and best of all, and gratifies the most controlling part of himself, obeying it in everything. And just as a city and every other composite system seems to be above all its most controlling part, the same is true of a human being; hence someone loves himself most if he likes and gratifies this part. Similarly, someone is called continent or incontinent because his understanding is or is not the master, on the assumption that this is what each person is. Moreover, his own voluntary actions seem above all to be those involving reason. Clearly then, this, or this above all, is what each person is, and the decent person likes this most of all.<sup>40</sup>

Closely following Plato's argument in *Republic* IV, Aristotle distinguishes four parts of the soul in *EN* 1.13 – two non-rational parts, the vegetative and the desiderative parts, and two rational parts, practical and theoretical reason – on the grounds that we can observe psychological

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Plato's *Republic* IV, 588 – 589; *Phaedrus* 247b ff.

<sup>40</sup> *EN* 9.8, 1168b 29 – 1169a 3.

"impulses in contrary directions" and therefore different faculties at work.<sup>41</sup> Here too Aristotle uses political metaphors, describing the appetitive part of the soul as having the capability for *listening to, obeying, and being persuaded by reason.*<sup>42</sup>

However, to interpret these passages as suggesting that the Aristotelian *self* is an ontologically distinct part of the soul, separate from our appetitive parts, is to seriously misinterpret the import of these passages. As he argues in the famous 'proper function' argument of *EN* 1.7 (again echoing Plato),<sup>43</sup> the human function – that in which our identity as a natural kind consists – is an "activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason," that is, "a certain kind of life."<sup>44</sup> As we learn in *EN* 2, the virtuous life involves habitually feeling and acting as reason directs (feeling as the virtuous person feels and as her reason directs).<sup>45</sup> In the books on friendship we find a fuller picture of such a life as seen from the inside. The

<sup>41</sup> *EN* 1.13, 1102b 22; cf. Plato's *Republic* IV, where Socrates argues that one (unitary) faculty "will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time" (436c).

<sup>42</sup> *EN* 1.13, 1102b 30 – 35.

<sup>43</sup> Plato, *Republic* 1, 353c – 354a.

<sup>44</sup> *EN* 1.7, 1098a 6 – 7, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *EN* 2.6, 1107a 3.

five marks of friendship involve *boulesis*, or rational desire, the mark of which is *homonia*, agreement about the principles of right action:

This sort of concord [concerned with advantage and what affects life as a whole] is found in decent people. For they are in concord with themselves and with each other, since they are practically of the same mind; for their wishes are stable, not flowing back and forth like a tidal strait. They wish for what is just and advantageous, and also seek it in common.<sup>46</sup>

*Homonia* is absent in base persons and attenuated in the incontinent, for

Base people ... cannot be in concord, except to a slight degree, just as they can be friends only to a slight degree; for they seek to overreach in benefits to themselves [e.g., are unjust].<sup>47</sup>

Aristotle draws two fundamental contrasts in these passages. The first he has made throughout the *Ethics*: the virtuous person both *chooses* and *enjoys* virtuous action, since he is not only able to choose the correct action in the appropriate circumstances – the continent person can do that – but takes pleasure in such actions as well. It is precisely this feature of the virtuous person, constituting his *homonoia* or concord between the 'parts' of his soul, that the base person lacks. He attempts to

<sup>46</sup> EN 9.6, 1167b 5 – 9.

<sup>47</sup> EN 9.6, 1167b 10 – 12.

choose with multiple, conflicting parts of his soul at once. Second, Aristotle explicitly uses the language of justice to describe the relationship of each kind of person to himself: the virtuous person is just to himself, while the base person is unjust ('overreaching').

As a result of these and similar passages, Susanne Stern-Gillet has argued that we cannot understand the Aristotelian notion of 'self' descriptively, as a Cartesian does, but must understand it as a *normative* concept, or as she calls it, as an "achievement word." The Aristotelian notion of 'self,' she argues,

denotes a state of equilibrium between the various parts of the soul and constitutes an ideal towards which we should strive but which we may not reach. According to such a conception akratic and vicious people are not 'selves'; not only do their passions and appetites pull in different directions, but they rebel against and weaken the part that ought to direct them. Thus to the extent that Aristotelian selfhood is an evaluative, commendatory notion, it differs significantly from modern, purely descriptive conceptions of selfhood.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, virtue is an objective requirement for living the best life for beings of our kind, and persons approach full selfhood as they become virtuous, i.e., insofar as they not only recognize these requirements but

<sup>48</sup> Susanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995): p. 28.

are also motivated by and take pleasure in them.<sup>49</sup> Failure to do so, Aristotle suggests, is a kind of injustice to one's self. He specifies that justice and injustice to oneself is in the same class of justice that governs "masters or households,"

For in these discussions the part of the soul that has reason is distinguished from the nonrational part. People look at these and it seems to them that there is injustice to oneself, because in these parts it is possible to suffer something against one's own desires.<sup>50</sup>

In the books on friendship, Aristotle argues that the phenomenology of this injustice to oneself is both forward and backward-looking. Because he is vicious, the base person's "soul is in conflict," and he "remember[s] many disagreeable actions, and anticipate[s] others in the future," whence he seeks to forget himself in the company of others.<sup>51</sup> Each part of the vicious person's soul "pulls in a different direction, as though they were tearing him apart," so that

<sup>49</sup> The distinction between virtue as an objective obligation necessary for the best life and as a subjective internalization of this requirement is Stephen Grant's in "Towards an Aristotelian Sense of Obligation," *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network* 14 (2) 2007: pp. 159 - 174.

<sup>50</sup> EN 5.11, 1138b 6 - 9.

<sup>51</sup> EN 9.4, 1166b 16 - 21.

even if he cannot be distressed and pleased at the same time, still he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him; for base people are full of regret. Hence the base person appears not to have a friendly attitude even towards himself, because he has nothing loveable about him.<sup>52</sup>

In light of this, Aristotle concludes, "If this state is utterly miserable, everyone should earnestly shun vice and try to be decent; for that is how someone will have a friendly relation to himself and will become a friend to another."<sup>53</sup>

### **Solving the Explanatory Problem**

In light of the above, we can explain why a friend whose friend has lost his virtue retains obligations of loyalty while friends in failed friendships of pleasure and utility do not (though they do retain obligations of justice).

In addition to notions of material, formal, and efficient causality, Aristotle also has in his explanatory repertoire the notion of a final cause, a goal or fulfillment, which moves us from the future (so to speak). When Aristotle

<sup>52</sup> EN 9.3, 1166b 22 – 25. For a textual problem regarding the regret of the base person and Aristotle's previous remarks about the *akratic* man, see Terence Irwin, "Vice and Reason," *The Journal of Ethics* 5 (2001); George Pakaluk, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics Books VIII and IX, Translation with a Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), esp. p. 177; and Gillet (1995).

<sup>53</sup> EN 9.3, 26 – 29.

speaks of friends 'living together' and 'engaging in common pursuits,' he surely has in mind the friends' future goals, the objects of their mutual striving. What *telologically* unites the lower friendships is the promise of *lower* future goods - pleasure and utility. These are 'lower' in part because there comes a point in time when these either obtain or fail to obtain. In character friendships, on the other hand, the good to be achieved by the relationship is (a) the good of the other and (b) the obtaining of the other's help in achieving one's own good character. This normative end is *not* one that simply obtains or fails to while we yet live. Rather, this end is part and parcel of Aristotle's conception of what a human life *is*, a continual becoming or falling away from the full actualization of our nature. If it is the case in character friendship that our mutual goal is the upbuilding of character, our friend's loss of integrity (through the acquisition of vice) does not flip the 'off' switch on our affections precisely because the goal *for our friend* that we have loved is a possible one that is always already *ahead* of us. My friend's character calls to me from a future that ought to be, and I am a loyal friend insofar as I act in the interests of that self that ought to be.

Suppose, as Stern-Gillet suggests, that the Aristotelian 'self' is indeed normative, and a teleological or 'achievement-defined' being at that. Insofar as the moral and intellectual virtues are necessary for the achievement of the best life for human beings, and the achievement of these virtues is the achievement of an integrated 'self,' Aristotle's 'self' is nothing other than the objective requirement of morality on our lives in the form of a person. As both Kant and Aristotle recognize, the demand of morality - that we achieve this integrated self in order to live the best and most just kind of life - can be expressed to the vicious person as an assertoric imperative: "earnestly shun vice and try to be decent," since every member of our kind by nature seeks *eudaimonia* and vice makes its achievement impossible.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, on Aristotle's model of friendship to oneself, this demand is nothing less than the demand of our kind of being for rectificatory justice,<sup>55</sup> the same demand that 'other selves'

<sup>54</sup> Kant would differ only in the justification of the imperative, not in its content.

<sup>55</sup> Kant would agree. The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative has the consequence that by treating your own humanity as a mere means you commit injustice towards yourself; we have a perfect duty to avoid this. In *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant argues that the moral law demands both punishment and a 'revolution of the will' in such cases: a demand both for

we are friends with would place on us were they to lose their virtue. The difference between the two demands – exhortative and rectifactory – is that, in the case of an unalterable loss of virtue, there is no one left to listen, and we can dissolve the friendship without blame: "the friend who dissolves the friendship seems to be doing nothing absurd ... for he was not the friend of a person of this sort; hence, if the friend has altered, and he cannot save him, he leaves him."<sup>56</sup> The base person cannot dissolve his friendship with his self. Insofar as he is vicious, he is, in a perfect inversion of friendship, forced to live with his worst enemy.

Just so far as we regard the self of another person as our own self (as we do completely in a perfect friendship), that person's self functions as a diachronic final cause of our obligations of care – loyalty – to our friend. If our friend begins to lose his virtue – to become an enemy to himself – we find ourselves at the right time and place, in the right relationship, and in the right circumstances to

rectificatory justice and an obligation to rescue the proper relation between the *Wille* and the *Willkür*. See my "Grace and the New Man: Conscious Humiliation and the Revolution of Disposition in Kant's *Religion*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 81 (3) 2007.

<sup>56</sup> EN 9.3, 1165b 22 – 24. Kant thinks this is impossible. See previous footnote.

exercise the virtue of loyalty: to persevere in acts exemplifying the particular justice of rectification, even at some risk to ourselves (as if facing a thief), for our friend's sake. If this is impossible, there is no blame in dissolving the friendship, for such a person has become an enemy to every 'self,' to the demands of morality itself, and is no longer 'another self,' our friend.<sup>57</sup> He has become Aristotle's beast, Locke's Tyger, Kant's demon.<sup>58</sup>

To summarize: in every kind of friendship there is a good that moves affection and generates loyalty across time; in the lower friendships this is an external good that, at some time, can cease to be possible to achieve through the friendship. 'Lovers' can grow ugly and business arrangements can go bad. Such circumstances bring about, or are sufficient for, the cessation of the relationship: my friend's help in achieving such goods ceases to be attractive because it ceases to be help. This is not the case with the internal good of virtue: it rarely - except in extreme cases - ceases to be a real possibility, and so my friend's character continues to place me under

<sup>57</sup> Kant calls this possibility *demonic*.

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2; Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §11; Kant, *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore Greene and Hoyt Hudson (New York: Harper, 1960): p. 30.

obligation to act in his interest. It is not the memory of the former friendship that generates the obligation of loyalty, for the cause of my loyalty does not lie in the past. Rather, as a final cause, on object of our mutual striving, it always lies just beyond the horizon of the present. Of course, as in all instances of the obligations love (care) generates, there is a history to the fact that this cause acts on me now. Yet for Aristotle, unlike obligations of justice, while that history explains, it does not justify my ongoing loyalty to friends whom I love for their own sake, for their selves.

## 5. Conclusion

Let us return, for a moment, to Aristotle's statement that, in case (1), in which we have been deceived about the character of our friend by the friend, we are justified in blaming our friend. Aristotle's metaphor for the kind of blameworthiness involved here is instructive. He says that we are "even more justified [in accusing him of wrongdoing] than in accusing debasers of the currency, to the extent that his evildoing debases something more precious."<sup>59</sup> The acceptability of a coin as a medium of exchange depends on the mutual belief of buyers and sellers that the coin

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<sup>59</sup> EN 9.3, 1165b 12.

represents what they believe it represents (real credit). Forged monies undercut this belief, for forged monies represent no credit at all. Hence, the debasing of a currency through the influx of forged monies undercuts the trust of each party in the particular coin, and in the reliability of coins in general. Insofar as this trust is a necessary condition of economic exchange, a sufficient influx of forged monies into a system of exchange can undercut the system itself. So too in the case of friendship: a series of dissembling relationships may undercut a person's ability to engage in real friendships in the future. The loss, in this case, is greater insofar as friendship is the greatest external good in the ways discussed in chapter one.

Even more exactly, considered as a final cause of friendship, the character of my friend resembles a future contingent, and loyalty demands that we act on its basis in the present (unlike a promise or a contract, whose cause lies in the past and whose performance may lie in the future). Loyalty can therefore be misplaced when its object fails to come to be in the way we expect, as in the case of the famous loyal German patriot, Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, who was 'betrayed' by National Socialism and

who, in the name of loyalty to Germany, attempted to assassinate Hitler in 1944. The existence of loyalty depends on (a) beliefs about the reliable actualization of possible future goods, and (b) hope that they will obtain. Loyalty's value as a virtue, on the other hand, will be closely tied to (a) the real (rather than expected) value of those hoped-for goods, and (b) the strength of the evidence upon which one hopes and trusts that they will obtain in the way expected.

The possibility of this future loss - what the standard model of loyalty we began with referred to as 'risk' - raises several ethical problems. Clearly, there must be some evidential relation between a person's action and her character: this relation, which we can form true or false beliefs about, is one condition for the possibility of both loyalty and friendship to others and their forfeiture. But this evidential relation, which Aristotle largely treats as unproblematic, can die the death of a thousand small cuts. As Aquinas and Kierkegaard point out, people lie. We will examine their thoughts on this problem in chapters three and five. In chapter four we will examine the extent to which Immanuel Kant agrees with Aristotle that a friend is

the moral law personified, and that friends have perfect duties to perfect one another in virtue.

## CHAPTER 3. AQUINAS ON LOYALTY: LOVE, TRUST, PRESUMPTION AND HOPE

"Among good people [there] is trust,  
the belief that he would never do injustice [to a friend],  
and all the other things expected in a true friendship."  
St. Thomas Aquinas, Eth. 8.4 [1592]

"I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness."  
— Iago, Othello 2.3.327

### Introduction

This chapter has two aims: to explicate Aquinas' theory of friendship and loyalty and to emphasize the way in which Aquinas stands as a mediator between ancient and contemporary theories of loyalty. In order to do this, I will discuss Aquinas's theory of action before discussing his theory of friendship. This is necessary because the conjunction of these theories creates two problems. The first problem is that the possibility of deception threatens the feasibility of loyalty and friendship. The second problem is that Aquinas's initial justification of loyalty renders it prone to the variability of natural affections.

### 1. Aquinas's Theory of Action

Although all action is for the sake of some good, according Aquinas, this good has a double aspect. The intended good has a *material* aspect - the specific object aimed at - as well as a *formal* aspect - some feature of the object for the sake of which the object is intended. If you ask what I intend to eat, for instance, I can simply say 'cake.' That answer specifies the material end of my action. If you ask me why I intend to eat cake, I can respond with any number of reasons: because it's sweet and tasty; because it's expected at a birthday party; because Marie Antoinette told me to. Answers such as these specify the formality under which I desire to eat cake.

To eat cake or not to eat cake? It is possible for us to ask this question, Aquinas claims, for two reasons. On the side of the object, *no* object is perfectly good save God, and thus no object can perfectly capture our love. (We would be unable *not* to love a perfect good perfectly known, however.) But since what we encounter in the world are less than perfect objects, we are able weigh the various formalities under which we apprehend, say, cake, and (re)direct our attention to an aspect that best suits our

more ultimate ends.<sup>1</sup> On the side of the subject, the formality under which I apprehend cake as good may have two effects - immediate and remote - on our passions. Most immediately, an object brings about a change in my appetites so as to make them complacent, i.e., to value it. This change is an affective passion Aquinas calls 'love.' More remotely, my appetites can move toward a loved object as an end of action. This movement is called 'desire.'<sup>2</sup> Aquinas uses the objective explanation to ground human freedom in a world of objective value; the subjective explanation traces the limits of human action around the lovable - we can only seek what we in fact love - for love is both logically and temporally prior to desire.

Insofar as "the end is the good desired and loved by each one," it follows that "every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind."<sup>3</sup> Thus, as Paul Wadell writes,

Aquinas has a love-centered ethic. Our actions are empowered by love because they are born from our desire for something good. Desire is love at work ... Morality begins in love, works through desire, and is

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (hereafter *ST*) I-II, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns, 1947): q. 13, a6, c; see also *ST* Ia, q. 105, a. 4, c.

<sup>2</sup> *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 2, c.

<sup>3</sup> *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 6, c.

completed in joy. Obviously, then, the passions and affections are integral to Thomas's account of the moral life.<sup>4</sup>

Yet this is only part of the truth, for as I have suggested above, Aquinas' conception of human activity includes both subjective and objective aspects that together determine that activity. On the side of the subject, Aquinas writes that

[In] every agent who is acting through his will in view of an end, two conditions are required in his attitude toward the end before he acts for it, namely, knowledge of the end and the inclination to reach it ... But to make this intention possible, two conditions are again necessary, namely, that the end is attainable; and that it is good, because we only strive after what is good.<sup>5</sup>

Corresponding to these three subjective conditions – knowledge, feasibility (thought possible), and desire – are

<sup>4</sup> Paul Wadell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992): p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, 3 Sent. d. 23, q. 1, a. 5 (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris angelici ordinis predicatorum Opera omnia ad fidem optimarum editionum accurate recognita, Parmae typis Petri Fiaccadori*, 25 vols., 1852-1873, vol. VII; Reprint: New York, Musurgia, 1948-1950, vol. VII-1); this argument is repeated again at ad. 5: "If anyone is to start acting in view of some end, he must first know that end, and secondly desire it. But because the will can desire possible and impossible objects, and because no one really strives after what is not attainable for him even though he may desire it, for these reasons it is necessary for the will, if it is to begin to act, that it should tend toward its object as to something possible." I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Loughlin for his help with this translation and reference.

three objective conditions: the object is a real object, it is possible for the agent to achieve, and it is good for the agent. These are necessary insofar as Aquinas believes that the world always acts on us first - or, to use his Aristotelian terminology, the world 'impresses' itself on us first.<sup>6</sup>

Love and desire thus constitute but one of three conditions which are jointly sufficient for the occurrence of an action. Action requires

1. that the object be apprehended or known as good;
  2. that the object be thought to be a possibly attainable object of human activity;
- (1) and (2) imply
3. that the object be loved and desired.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ST I-II*, q. 26 a. 2 c: "For the appetitive movement is circular, as stated in *De Anima* iii.10; because the appetible object moves the appetite, introducing itself, as it were, into its intention; while the appetite moves towards the realization of the appetible object, so that the movement ends where it began." Throughout I will use the translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1922).

These conditions are connected in intricate ways. Like Aristotle,<sup>7</sup> Aquinas insists that (1) precedes (3). Once known, the apparent goodness of an object arouses our love for it in one of two ways, either disinterestedly (for the object's own sake), or interestedly (for the sake of something else). The former Aquinas calls the *love of friendship*, and the latter he calls the *love of concupiscence*.<sup>8</sup> Some things, like cake, cannot be loved with the love of friendship, for their goodness is purely instrumental to the satisfaction of some other end we desire. Other beings deserve to be loved with the love of friendship because of their intrinsic goodness. Loving instrumental goods with the love of friendship and loving goods with intrinsic worth merely for the uses we can put them to are sins. The former includes vices like greed; the latter includes many unjust or uncaring actions. There is a third possibility: lacking love for good things altogether. This unnamed vice is unnamed because it is impossible; to suffer it would require being dead to all that is good, and that would be impossible, or very nearly so, for a human being. It would be a sickness unto death.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 12.7, 1072a 30: "Desire is consequent on opinion rather than opinion on desire; for the thinking is the starting-point."

<sup>8</sup> *ST I-II*, q. 26, a. 4, ad. 1.

This topic will taken up again in the next section when Aquinas' treatment of friendship is discussed.

About the relation between (2) and (3), Aquinas writes:

First then, the good produces in the faculty an inclination towards it, a sense of affinity with it, a sense that the good and itself are naturally fitted for each other; this is the emotion called love. The corresponding contrary, when it is some evil to the agent, is hatred. Second, if the good is not yet possessed, it sets up in the faculty a motion towards attaining this good which it has come to love. This is desire; the opposite is aversion or disgust. Third, once the good is possessed, the faculty finds repose in its possession. This is pleasure or joy; the opposite is sadness or grief.<sup>9</sup>

An object affects us as an end of action in one or more ways, depending on whether the object is good or bad for us; Aquinas calls these responses the set of six 'affective emotions.' Reading from left to right, the affective emotions aroused by an object acting on us proceed in the following order:

Object	Passion	Activity	Possession
Some good	Love	Desire	Joy/Pleasure
Some evil	Hatred	Aversion	Sorrow/Pain

It is in relation to these affective emotions that (2) becomes important. The world often pushes back against our

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<sup>9</sup> ST I-II, q. 23, a. 4 c.

desires and so frustrates some of our purposes. The achievement of some goods becomes difficult; possibilities get closed off. If this objective push against desire pushes too hard, it kills it.

Desire is not, however, without help. Aquinas discusses a second group of emotions called the 'irascible' or 'spirited' emotions whose function is to strengthen the affective emotions in difficult circumstances.

There are times when the soul finds that the acquisition of some good or the avoidance of some evil is possible only with difficulty, or even by fighting; it is beyond our ready power and control. ... The emotions of the affective appetite are therefore those which bear upon sense-good or sense-evil pure and simple: joy and sorrow, love and hatred, and the like. The emotions of the spirited appetite, on the other hand, are those which bear upon the sense-good or sense-evil as arduous, i.e., insofar as it is difficult to attain or avoid: courage, fear, hope and the like.<sup>10</sup>

There are three irascible pairs of emotions that support the three pairs of affective emotions.<sup>11</sup>

Material Object	Formal Object	Irascible Passions
Future Arduous End	Good not yet possessed	Hope or Despair
	Evil not yet befallen	Courage or Fear

<sup>10</sup> *ST I-II*, q. 23, a. 1 c.

<sup>11</sup> *ST I-II*, q. 23, a. 4 c.

Present Arduous End	Good already possessed	Null set (an achieved good is no longer difficult)
	Evil already befallen	Anger (no contrary)

Hope, courage and anger buttress the desire for a difficult good, while despair and fear undermine it. Each of the irascible emotions presupposes an affective emotion, either love or hatred, and each is incompatible with joy (although not with sorrow). When the arduous good is the object of a morally obligatory action – such as the education of one's children – the lack of love sufficient to motivate the action includes the sin of sloth, and the lack of hope the sin of despair (in addition to whatever other wrongdoing one may be blamed for vis-a-vis neglect).

## **2. Aquinas on Friendship**

What, then, of the good that is friendship? Suppose I love Smith and desire that he be my friend. For Aristotle, who lacked Aquinas' distinction between the love of friendship and the love of concupiscence, my friendship for Smith could have one of two exclusive motivations. I could either,

1. Love Smith for Smith's sake in virtue of some good he possesses, or

2. Love some good for myself and Smith in virtue of his ability to provide it.

The first formulation intends Smith as an end in himself, as an object loved for his own sake; the second formulation intends Smith as a means to some other good. Aquinas argues that these loves are not mutually exclusive, for

the movement of love has a twofold tendency: toward the good which a man wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence towards the good that he wishes to another, and love of friendship towards him to whom he wishes good.<sup>12</sup>

On Aquinas' account, the material object of friendship is always the friend himself, the person "to whom our friendship is given," while the formal object of friendship is that feature of the friend that motivates our love for him (which may include his being useful, delightful, or virtuous) and in accord with which we "love those good things which we desire for our friend."<sup>13</sup>

Against Aristotle, then, Aquinas claims that friends can be loved for their usefulness and for their own sake. In other words, Aquinas argues that I can

<sup>12</sup> *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4, c.

<sup>13</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 3, c

1. Love Smith for Smith's sake in virtue of some good feature he possesses and
2. Love some good for myself, and also love Smith in virtue of his ability to provide it.

Far from being exclusive motivations, Aquinas thinks that both (1) and (2) are necessary features of true friendly love.

This is so for two reasons. First, he says, all friendships necessarily involve three features:

first *benevolence*, which consists in this, that someone wills the other person good and his evil wills not; second, *concord*, that consists in this, that friends will and reject the same things; and third, *beneficence*, which consists in this, that someone does good deeds for the person he loves and does not harm him.<sup>14</sup>

Love (affection) plus benevolence is to "love someone so as to wish good to him," for his own sake, and beneficence is the practical exemplification of benevolence.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless,

[mere] well-wishing [does not] suffice for friendship, for a certain mutual love is requisite, since friendship is between friend and friend: and this

<sup>14</sup> *Comnntarium super Epistolam ad Romanos (In Rom.)* 12.3 ad v. 15 – 17 [9 – 17] [996]; cf. *ST* II-II, q. 23 a. 1 c. and

<sup>15</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 23 a. 1 c.

well-wishing is founded on some kind of communication,<sup>16</sup>

where by 'communication' Aquinas means a special relation by blood, country or choice.<sup>17</sup> Insofar as all friendship involves mutual beneficence - a return of love - all friendship includes as a part of its formal object the notion of a friend as a giver of good things. That is, it is a part of the friend's being good that he is good to me and acts in my interests. A friend thus delights me and is useful to me, but it need not be the case that I love my friend for the sake of the goods he promises and delivers. To love a friend for his own sake is to love him for all that is his, including his interest in my own good, even while considering his good greater than (more motivating than) my share of that good in enjoying it. My own good is a connatural concomitant of true friendship, for "the same virtuous habit inclines us to love and desire the beloved

<sup>16</sup> ST II-II, q. 23 a. 1 c.

<sup>17</sup> "The different species of friendship are differentiated ... secondly, in respect of the different kinds of communion on which friendships are based; thus there is one species of friendship between kinsmen, and another between fellow citizens or fellow travelers ..." (ST II-II, q. 23, a. 5 c.). Robert Johann expresses this well when he writes that "[friendship] is conceived as adding to the one-sided love of benevolence a certain society of lover and beloved in their love" in *The Meaning of Love* (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1966): p. 46-47. Paul Wadell, following Aristotle, rightly calls this society a "miniature community" (p. 69).

good, and to rejoice in it."<sup>18</sup> Of course, we may love a person merely for the good they can give us, but such love, because it is not for the sake of the person, does not qualify as true friendship.

Not everyone is convinced by this line of argument. As Paul De Letter has argued, there are two ways in which Aristotle's claim that in perfect friendship we love the friend 'for his own sake' has been interpreted:

1. Traditional (Augustinian-Thomistic) Interpretation:

Not in order to acquire something other than the friend.

2. Modern (Scotistic-Suarezian) Interpretation: Not in order to acquire something for oneself.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 28 a. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Paul De Letter, "Hope and Charity in St. Thomas," *Thomist; A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 13 (1950), p. 241: "The traditional phrase which states that in charity God is loved for His own sake (*propter seipsum*) can be and actually has been understood in two different ways: so as to mean, not for the sake of something else (*non propter aliud*), in the sense that nothing else than [the friend] is sought or intended in charity, though the possession of [the friend as a source of good for oneself] is actually desired and obtained in charity, or so as to exclude from charity all self-regard on man's part who has to abstract from his own good, even from the possession of [the friend] and the enjoyment found therein."

The first interpretation weakly requires that the desire for our own good not *motivate* the friendship; the presence of desire for good from friends is a necessary but not sufficient condition of concupiscence. On the other hand, (2) holds that the presence of desire fatally taints human relationships; self-interest is a sufficient condition of use. Aquinas clearly rejects (2) in favor of (1). On the one hand, he holds that to have merely self-interested motivations for a relationship is antithetical to the nature of friendship:

Although to every one, that is loveable which is good for him, yet there is no need for the loveable object to be loved for the very reason that it is good for him, and be directed back to him as its end, since friendship also does not twist back to itself the good it wishes another.<sup>20</sup>

Yet on the other hand, he holds that our friendly love of others need not be ascetic:

True friendship wishes [i.e., desires] the sight of the friend and finds joy in mutual conversation [and other goods] ... It does not, however, make of the pleasure it derives from seeing and enjoying the friend the end of the friendship.<sup>21</sup>

As we will see in a later chapter, this difference in interpreting Aristotle's phrase, 'for his own sake,' will

<sup>20</sup> *III, Sent.* d. 29, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>21</sup> *III, Sent.* d. 27, q. 2, a. 1, ad. 11. For a more nuanced treatment of this distinction, see especially *ST II-II*, q. 27, a. 8.

mark one of the fundamental differences between Søren Kierkegaard and Aquinas, since Kierkegaard, following Kant (and, DeLetter argues, Scotus), requires that disinterested love abstract itself from all considerations of one's own good.

### **3. Two Problems**

Having briefly treated Aquinas' theories of action and friendship, we can begin to consider two problems generated by their conjunction. These problems mark a historical and conceptual transition in philosophical worries about the nature of friendship and loyalty, and, together with Kant and Kierkegaard, give us a set of problems still under discussion in contemporary work on friendship and loyalty.<sup>22</sup>

What the problems are can be shown by a simple argument. One premise underlying Aquinas' action theory is:

1. An object's being known is logically and temporally prior to a person's ability to desire it as a feasible good.

What follows from this is:

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<sup>22</sup> For example, see Neera Kapur Badhwar, "Introduction: The Nature and Significance of Friendship," in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Badhwar (New York: Cornell: 1993): p. 1 - 38.

2. Therefore, we cannot love what we do not know; and the greater the uncertainty surrounding our knowledge of the reality of some good, the less feasible (i.e., more arduous or risky) action for the sake of that good appears to us.

To this we can add the following premise, which Aquinas explicitly holds:

3. We have limited epistemic insight into the wills of others (i.e., regarding what they shall do), including those we would call friends.<sup>23</sup>

This entails that,

4. Uncertainty regarding our friend's will negatively impacts the feasibility of friendship.

In response to this problem, Aquinas argues that friendship requires (a) that the irascible passion of hope support our desire for this arduous good. Daniel Schwartz has shown that in addition Aquinas requires (b) that we make use of a rule of presumption – which I will argue Aquinas treats

<sup>23</sup> Schwartz (p. 94) cites *ST* I q. 94, a. 3 c. to support this: "Those things which cannot be known by merely human effort, and which are not necessary for the direction of human life, were not known by the first man; such as the thoughts of men, future contingent events, and some individual facts, as for instance the number of pebbles in a stream; and the like."

under the heading of 'trust' - in order to lend practical, 'as if' certainty to acts of friendship. However, precisely because this makes friendship dependent on hope and trust, friendship and loyalty between friends are vulnerable to two threats. Friendship will fail if (1) trust is lost or (2) hope becomes unreasonable.

Kierkegaard, as we'll see later, explicitly designs his theory of friendship as a response to these two threats. In recent philosophy, these 'failures' reappear as two problems. First, since the reasonableness of trust depends on the character of the person whom one is trusting, it is impossible to determine the value of trust independently of the goodness of the one trusted. Likewise, there is some debate about the coherence of talk about loyalty's value independent of the value of the object of the loyalty.<sup>24</sup> Second, following Kant, it is sometimes denied that loyalty can be a source (or an expression) of real obligations insofar as its rootedness in contingent, historically-rooted affections make it naturally prone to variability and thus exclude it from candidacy as a genuine moral obligation (which Kant limits to the categorically necessary).

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<sup>24</sup> See R.E. Ewin, "Loyalty and Virtues," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (169): pp. 403-119.

First, however, Aquinas.

#### **4. Hope, Trust, Loyalty and Presumption**

Daniel Schwartz has pointed out that insofar as what is desired in friendship is the good of the other as a friend, Aquinas' idea of friendship requires that friends need to will two things under the formality of friendship:

1. Some common goal (that produces concord);
2. To love the friend (i.e., *dilectio*, a love elicited by the will for the friend).<sup>25</sup>

It follows, Schwartz continues, that we hope for two things in friendship:

1. "that the common goal be accomplished," and
2. "that the friend's feelings, affections, and intentions, which sustain the relationship, [will] continue in the future."<sup>26</sup>

In true friendship, (1) would essentially consist in the mutual construction and re-enforcement of good character, though this might be expressed through any number of common projects. These common projects are what Aristotle calls a

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007): p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

'shared life.' As should be clear from chapter two, (2) expresses an expectation of the loyalty of a friend. Insofar as friendship involves benevolence and beneficence on our friend's part, we expect that a friend who loves us for our own sake will care for our interests and be loyal to us in meeting his obligations to do so. Care and loyalty, in other words, name the virtues that a friend exercises in providing for our interests, and are connatural concomitants (i.e., natural accompaniments) of friendship. Not everyone we call our friend meets his or her obligation of loyalty and care, and so our hopes in this regard can be disappointed. This possibility renders the achievement of true friendship less than certain, and insofar as we see this as a real possibility, the prospect of entering into a friendly relationship with x fails to motivate us.

Schwartz explains this practical problem as follows:

Friendship is one of the varieties of social relations, the reality of which depends on certain operations of the will. Assessing friendship's reality requires knowledge of certain facts about the other person's feelings, intentions, beliefs. Yet this cannot be known with certainty. Since friendship is a good, and it allows us to achieve other goods, uncertainty translates into risk.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Schwartz, p. 95.

Aquinas grounds our uncertainty regarding the wills of others in two ways:

those things which cannot be known by merely human effort, and which are not necessary for the direction of human life, were not known by the first man; such as the thoughts of men, future contingent events, and some individual facts, as for instance the number of pebbles in a stream, and the like.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, our uncertainty regarding the wills of others is a result of (a) our lacking epistemic access to the thoughts of others, and (b) our inability to gain certain knowledge of future singular contingents, including what others shall will. Insofar as friendship requires concord, a 'union of wills,' it follows that if the present and future intentions of others were completely opaque to us, friendship would not be a possible end of human action. As we will see in a later chapter, Kierkegaard largely accepts the antecedent but rejects the consequent of that statement; Aquinas (along with most other philosophers, including skeptics like Hume),<sup>29</sup> simply thinks the

<sup>28</sup> ST I q. 94 a. 3 c. See also *Super Evangelium S. Iohnis*, ed. P. Raphaelis Cai, O.P. (Rome: Marietti, 1952): *Super Ioan. 2, lect. 3*, no. 422: "For a human being, even if he knows others, nevertheless is not able to have certain knowledge about them, because he only sees those things which are apparent; and therefore for him work[s] provide the means of proof of others."

<sup>29</sup> In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume argues that there is a constant conjunction of mental acts and concrete actions, and that this conjunction affords us

antecedent is false: "works provide the means of proof of [others' wills and beliefs]."

### **Hope and Trust**

Insofar as we expect care and loyalty from our friends and we have no certainty that they will show this, argues Aquinas, acts of friendship on our part require hope in order for friendship to be a feasible good, since it is precisely this irascible passion's job to enable us to desire an arduous good.

Hope is caused by love of the good we would like to achieve for ourselves, and thus has self-interest as its ground. Aquinas discusses four conditions for an end's being an object of hope; these conditions constitute a set of formalities under which the object is desired. When we hope we apprehend an object:

1. As good;
2. As lying in the future;
3. As arduous (difficult to achieve); and

(as well as any constant conjunction does) an inference from acts to intentions. The inference is reliable, he argues, as evidenced by the fact that we detect (a) fictions and (b) lunacy (8.1.20) using it, and (c) we would be incapable of social intercourse if the inference were a poor one (8.1.8-9, 17).

4. As possible (i.e., as lying within our capacity and power to achieve, as feasible).<sup>30</sup>

If (1) were lacking we could not desire the object, while if the object obtained in the present or were easily obtainable it would not make sense to speak of hope rather than enjoyment or mere striving. Aquinas further argues that hope affects what appears feasible in (4) insofar as hope extends the scope of what is possible through reliance on the abilities of others.<sup>31</sup> When we hope in friendship, in other words, we hope that x be made possible to us by means of y's assistance. Hope thus helps to enable action by enabling desire to pursue some good rather than merely to wish for it.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Schwartz p. 109; these conditions are given by Aquinas at *ST* I-II, q. 40 a. 1c.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle writes that "What is possible is what we could achieve through our agency [including what our friends could achieve for us]; for what our friends achieve is, in a way, achieved through our agency, since the origin is in us" (*EN* 1112b 27 - 28). Aquinas quotes this passage at *ST* II-II q. 17 a. 1c.

<sup>32</sup> "Hope of its very nature is a help to action by making it more intense; and this for two reasons. First, by reason of its object, which is a good, difficult but possible. For the thought of its being difficult arouses our attention; while the thought that it is possible is not a drag on our effort. Hence it follows that by reason of hope man is intent on his action. Secondly, on account of its effect. Because hope, as stated above, causes pleasure; which is a help of action as stated above." *ST* I-II, q. 40 a. 8c.

However, this is where uncertainty regarding the present and future will of a friend undercuts the possibility of friendship, for the very hope on the basis of which we pursue friendship's common goal is itself made feasible by the continued care and loyalty of the friend. The hope that is a cause of friendship, then, requires reliance on the continued loyalty of our friend, and this reliance is reasonable only insofar as the friend is a legitimate object of trust.

Trust – an “assured reliance on someone” – also has four conditions discussed in various places by Aquinas.<sup>33</sup> In order to trust someone, a person must:

1. believe that he or she is an object of the other person's concern;
2. believe that the other person is just;
3. believe that the person is competent;
4. feel appropriately familiar with the person.

One reason we do not trust strangers is that our interests are not their responsibility; mere willingness to help on

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<sup>33</sup> See Marie George, “Aquinas on the Nature of Trust,” *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 103 – 23, for a full list of these citations. I rely heavily on George in the rest of this paragraph.

the part of a stranger does little to enhance our confidence in them.<sup>34</sup> Hence (1) limits trust to those who have obligations of justice or care to us, for we expect those who stand in special relation to us - family members, friends and promisers, for example - to make our interests their own more than those to whom we are not so related.

As for (2), it holds that we are only warranted trusting those who (in general) are just because it is reasonable to think that only a just person can be relied on to honor their obligations. Likewise, it is unreasonable to expect help from those who cannot be of some service to us, e.g., infants and the mentally disabled. Condition (3) thus limits trust to those who have some real ability to help us. Condition (4) is a psychological rather than a conceptual condition; it points out that we are not likely

<sup>34</sup> As I'll argue below, to say that we do not trust someone does not entail that we suspect them of evil. We have reasonable expectations that strangers will accurately tell us what time it is, or what direction the baseball stadium is, because (a) we assume they are 'minimally decent' Samaritans and (b) have no cause to wish us harm. On Aquinas' account, these expectations - what we might today call 'social trust' or 'decency' - do not rise to the level of trust, formally speaking. One might defend this by pointing out that a Hobbesian game-theorist will expect cooperation from competitors who have reached a Nash-equilibrium in the total absence of Aquinas' conditions (1) - (4).

to trust - in the strong sense of actually asking and relying on for help - those we are uncomfortable with.

Let us return to our problem. Insofar as the wills of others are somewhat opaque to us, we have less than certain knowledge that our friends will act as friends ought - with care and loyalty - now or in the future. As our certainty decreases, so does the feasibility of the friendship, that is, that friendship with *x* is a relation we can choose to engage in. (And because of the tight connection between friendship and the good life, this uncertainty in the speculative realm translates into unavoidable risk in the practical realm.) Insofar as all friendships are plagued by the inscrutability of the other's will, friendship requires two states in addition to love in order to overcome this uncertainty: (a) hope that the common goal of the friendship will be realized with the assistance of the friend, and (b) trust that the friend will be loyal - e.g., keep up his end of the friendship by meeting his obligations of care (i.e., performing, at minimum, (a)). However, trust has its own conditions of satisfaction, among which are that we believe ourselves to be the real concern of a truly just and capable person. Thus it is the character of the friend - which is presumably exhibited by

his actions – that is the object of our uncertainty.

Because it is the character of the friend that we love for his own sake, the revelation of some well-concealed viciousness or betrayal is tantamount to discovering you have ‘loved’ a stranger, and part of the pain in this *peripeteia* is learning that your trust was misplaced, sometimes to the point of harm. Witness ‘honest’ Iago.

### **The Role of Presumption in Friendship**

Uncertainty, of course, is distinct from distrust; to think that our lack of knowledge concerning the intentions of our friends translated into a need to distrust them would be a kind of practical *argumentum ad ignorantum*.<sup>35</sup>

However, Aquinas argues, good intent can, and should be, presumed. Aquinas argues in several places that we should, as a practical rule, presume the good intentions of others when we must act in ignorance of their actual intentions. The idea of a rule of presumption is a legal idea which “is not so much concerned with ascertaining the facts as with proceeding on them ... [for] Presumption rules belong to the

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<sup>35</sup> Here I disagree with George, who writes that “to the extent that trust is not perfect, mistrust is present” (p. 107, fn. 12).

realm of praxis, not theory."<sup>36</sup> Aquinas states his version of the rule thus:

Good is to be presumed of everyone unless the contrary appears, provided this does not threaten injury to another: because, in that case, one ought to be careful not to believe everyone readily, according to 1 John 4:1: "Believe not every spirit."<sup>37</sup>

This rule - 'de quolibet praesumendum est bonum, nisi probetur contrarium,' or 'good is to be presumed of everyone unless the contrary is proved' - is grounded in the Natural Law:

He who interprets doubtful matters for the best, may happen to be deceived more often than not; yet it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man, because in the latter case an injury [*iniuria*] is inflicted, but not in the former.<sup>38</sup>

The argument Aquinas is defending in this passage relies on the premise that human beings are affected, for good or ill, by our judgments about them. This is not the case with, say, rocks. People deserve honor or contempt on the basis of their character, while rocks do not. Hence an

<sup>36</sup> Edna Ullmann-Margalit, "On Presumption," *Journal of Philosophy*, 80 (1983): pp. 144 – 45. Schwartz quotes Ullmann-Margalit approvingly; compare Joseph Cascarelli, "Presumption of Innocence and Natural Law: Machiavelli and Aquinas," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 41 (1996): pp. 229 – 270.

<sup>37</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 70 a. 3 ad. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 60, a. 4, ad. 1.

unsubstantiated 'evil' judgment against a good man deprives him of honor that is his by right.<sup>39</sup> The rule of presumption Aquinas defends is therefore not based on maximizing expected utility - we may 'happen to be deceived more often than not' as a result of its use - but instead preserves the rights of the innocent against arbitrary abuse.<sup>40</sup>

As such, Aquinas' rule of presumption requires that Othello think well of Iago - though not to Desdemona's detriment, or that the limit on thinking well of Iago is that one must also think well of Desdemona. For Aquinas' rule is not without conditions. Two circumstances can override Aquinas' rule of presumption, and either is a sufficient condition for overriding trust:

- Exception 1: Sufficient contrary evidence (e.g., some preponderance of evidence that we are not an object of the other person's concern, or that they are not just, or that they are not competent); or

<sup>39</sup> 'Iniuria,' as Schwartz argues, "connotes not just harm but harm connected to the violation of a right ('ius')" (p. 101).

<sup>40</sup> As Schwartz also points out, insofar as Aquinas holds that the intellect can be moved through an act of choice (cf. *ST* II-II, q. 1 a. 4c), "to believe [in the goodness of another] can be meritorious (*ST* II-II, q. 2 a. 9c)" (p. 104).

- Exception 2: Circumstances in which following the rule threatens harm to another.

To take one famous case of (E2), Socrates argues that it would be unjust to return a loaned weapon to an enraged friend; Aquinas' rule of presumption is overridden here by the probable harm the friend intends to another with the weapon.<sup>41</sup> As for (E1), both Aquinas and Aristotle comment that, "it is hard to trust anyone speaking against someone whom we ourselves have found reliable for a long time."<sup>42</sup>

Though we would seem to have ventured far afield of loyalty at this point, the importance of interpretations of (E1) and (E2) can be bought out as follows. Aquinas has argued for a tight connection between the *feasibility* of friendship and the *reasonable reliance* we place on care and loyalty from our friends. The less reasonable this reliance is, the higher the risk friendship threatens and the greater the chance that we will not feel we have obligations of care and loyalty. As Aquinas has argued, one formality under which we love a friend as a friend is in the expectation of mutual benevolence and beneficence. Where our expectation in this regard is low - for whatever

<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Republic* 331c.

<sup>42</sup> Eth. VIII. 4 [1592].

reason – the less reason we have for thinking the relationship which makes demands of care and loyalty on us is real. That is simply the influence the ‘objective pole’ of Aquinas’ theory of action has on human motivation. To use an example, the connection between the feasibility of a friendship and reasonable reliance on the friend, which we have been discussing under the name of *trust* to this point, is an essential target of the criminal interrogator, who seeks to break a bond of loyalty by introducing doubts regarding the trustworthiness of the criminal’s beloved friend, group, or whatever, oftentimes by attacking (E1) (“they’ve abandoned you”) or (E2) (“they will abandon you”).

Incidentally, Kierkegaard (or at least one of his pseudonyms, Johannes de Silentio) seems to think that *only* (E1) can override loyalty – some actual, not merely threatened harm – and thus that (E2) should not count as an exception at all. If this was correct, it would be a reason for conceptualizing the nature and limits of loyalty in ways contrary to Aquinas, ways which would, say, on a strong interpretation of (E1), make possible something like a transcendental suspension of the ethical when God

commands you to sacrifice your son on Mt. Moriah.<sup>43</sup> For anything less than actual harm would fail to override Aquinas' rule of presumption, and anything less than otherwise total loyalty in the absence of actual harm would combine unjustified distrust with possible betrayal and despair.<sup>44</sup> If we think (E2) is required in addition to (E1) on the other hand, then we must think that Silentio's conception of loyalty dangerously blurs the line between the supererogatory, the foolish, blamable negligence and fanaticism, i.e., that Abraham is a foolish fanatic.

## **6. Aquinas' Debts and Legacy**

Let us once again take stock. We have been slowly developing two problems surrounding loyalty in Aristotle and Aquinas.

First, both Aristotle and Aquinas recognize that the possibility of deception threatens the feasibility of loyalty and friendship. Aristotle deals with this problem in *EN* 9.3, but does not address it other than to say that it promises more woe to us than a devaluing of currency.

<sup>43</sup> See Søren Kierkegaard, "Problemata 1," in *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993): p. 55 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Perhaps, indeed, this is how we should interpret the "Soundings" with which Kierkegaard opens *Fear and Trembling*.

Aquinas does address the problem, and attempts to find both epistemic and affective aids - a rule of presumption and hope, respectively - to stabilize loyalty and friendship.

Second, because care and loyalty are for a particular person, they are justified in a different way than obligations of justice are justified. The latter are owed to every person regardless of accident or circumstance, all things being equal, unless we expressly or implicitly contract otherwise, as we do in promising or creating children. Because loyalty and friendship are grounded on a contingent, affective response to some feature of a particular person, they are vulnerable to that contingency.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Aristotle accepts the variability of loyalty in the lower kinds of friendship, but can ground loyalty on something more stable in the case of perfect friendship: the other's 'self.'

Aquinas' solution to the problem is similar, though his solution requires theological premises. Briefly it is as follows. First, after arguing the theological virtue of charity is a kind of friendship, Aquinas argues that friendship can

[extend] to someone in respect of another, as, when a man has friendship for a certain person, for his sake

he loves all belonging to him, be they children, servants, or connected with him in any way. Indeed, so much do we love our friends, that for their sake we love all who belong to them, even if they hurt us or hate us; so that, in this way, the friendship of charity extends even to our enemies, whom we love out of charity in relation to God, to Whom the friendship of charity is chiefly directed.<sup>45</sup>

In response to the objection that this requires us to love all persons equally, he responds that

this is unreasonable. For the affection of charity, which is an inclination of grace, is not less orderly than the natural appetite, which is the inclination of nature, for both inclinations flow from Divine wisdom. ... Consequently the inclination of grace which is the effect of charity must needs be proportionate to those actions which have to be performed outwardly, so that, to wit, the affection of our charity be more intense towards those to whom we ought to behave with greater kindness.<sup>46</sup>

He clarifies this last sentence by arguing that "love can be unequal in two ways," either in respect to "the good we wish our friend," or by "its action being more intense."

In the first respect we should love everyone equally insofar as "we wish them all one same generic good, namely everlasting happiness."<sup>47</sup> In the second respect we need not love everyone equally, for as he goes on to explain, although we can be equally benevolent to everyone, we cannot be equally beneficent. However, he adds, given that

<sup>45</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1, ad. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 6, c.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, ad. 1, here and below.

our ability to be beneficent is finite, we ought to be more beneficent to those who are holy more than those who are not.<sup>48</sup> Beneficence, then – the active care we have for the interests of others – is like honor, for “love regards good in general, whereas honor regards the honored person’s own good, for it is given to a person in recognition of his own virtue.”<sup>49</sup>

Aquinas has argued that,

1. We owe benevolence to others because they are creatures of God (whom we love with the love of friendship);
2. We ought to love more those to whom ‘natural appetite’ inclines us (i.e., love our families and others close to us more than strangers); and
3. We must discriminate in our beneficence on the basis of desert.

If loyalty involves an obligation of beneficence to a particular person, then Aquinas has argued that we should be equally benevolent but, because of differences in loyalty, differently beneficent to different people. On

<sup>48</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 6, ad. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 1, ad. 2.

the other hand, Aquinas wants to limit the proper objects of our beneficence to those who deserve it according to some principle of justice. (1) - (3) form a consistent set - they entail that my special duties of beneficence (a) are directed toward people to whom I stand special relations, and (b) are directed unequally to people within that set based on desert. In all cases, however, what grounds my benevolence to anyone is not the person, but a property they cannot lose - being a child of God - and I am to direct my beneficence to them *at minimum* to the extent that I wish them eternal salvation and am 'loyal' to them - i.e., act in their interests - in that one regard. This solution to the 'variability' problem, then, mirrors Aristotle's insofar as it specifies a normative, final cause that grounds my historically-acquired care regardless of circumstance. One difference, however, is that for Aristotle this final cause is located in a concrete person, whereas for Aquinas it is Transcendent in the person of God.

Lurking in the background of this solution is a third problem. If we wish to ground love and loyalty so as to make them immune from variability, Aquinas hints, we must do so on impartial principles, such as justice. It follows

from this that *everyone*, in some minimal sense, has an equally legitimate claim to our care. Many contemporary thinkers find this deeply objectionable. This is because of their understanding of care and loyalty as rooted in contingent affections and historical circumstance: it simply makes no sense to talk of a loyalty we have to *everyone*.

## CHAPTER 4. KANT AND FRIENDSHIP

### 1. Background

Imagine your neighbor, Pat, wants to borrow a wrench to tighten a lugnut on the tire of the black van in his driveway. You're a bit intimidated by the muscular Pat, especially since it's obvious that Pat thinks you're a bit of a wimp. Still, though you don't owe Pat the time of day, and though he doesn't have any rights over your wrench, you might choose to be beneficent by lending Pat your wrench. For his part, Pat can respect you by not taking your wrench from you in painful or threatening ways. No one, of course, would say that the two of you need to love each other, or even take pleasure in each other's company, in order to be civil to one another. However, many have said that the above scenario contains the whole of Kant's thinking about your ethical relationship with Pat, i.e., that Kant believes human relationships can be completely and adequately captured in the language of duties, rights, and the occasional beneficent act. That's not right, nor is it a complete picture of his ethics.

So let's up the ante. Imagine that while handing your wrench over to Pat you smirk at the fact that he's too poor to afford his own wrenches. Peering over his shoulder as he cranks the lugnut (to make sure your wrench doesn't get 'misplaced'), you give low, disapproving whistles to no one in particular regarding the sorry state of his hubcaps. Did they come from K-Mart or from a salvage yard? After seeing you off his driveway, Pat decides that the next time he needs a wrench he'll simply ask someone else.

What would a Kantian say about this scenario? One possibility is to treat such cases as involving multiple maxims, each evaluable according to some version of the Categorical Imperative. Can we universalize a smirking maxim? Do low, disapproving whistles treat Pat as an end in himself? *Prima facie*, however, it's not clear that Kant's Categorical Imperative would prohibit such actions, obtuse as they are, unless the maxims being evaluated had Pat's hurt feelings as their intended object. The reason the Categorical Imperative has little to say here is because the ethical problem in this situation isn't that you've violated one of Pat's rights - arguably, no one has a right that you be polite to them, or that you like them - or that you've failed to be beneficent. He did use your

wrench, after all. No, the problem is that you're rude; you have failed to show Pat the respect he deserves, to make him feel his worth. Whatever violent means by which Pat remedies this defect in your personality, Kant remedies it as a problem in a section of the *Metaphysics of Morals* called *The Doctrine of Virtue*.

## 2. Kant's Two Ethical Theories

The great insight of Kant's 'Copernican Revolution' is that, if and when the world appears to us, it does so by conforming to the already-existing structures of our understanding that Kant calls the 'categories.'<sup>1</sup> Reason, Kant argues, imposes its law-like principles onto the world, and by making the world appear to us in a systematic fashion, makes science possible. This does not entail that there *is* any world we know, but only that *any* world we *can* know will appear to us under the categories. The same

<sup>1</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*), trans. and ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998): B xvi. Translations of Kant's practical works are taken from *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). I'll refer to Kant's works in this volume using the following abbreviations:

—*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: *GW*

—*Metaphysics of Morals*: *MM*

—*Critique of Practical Reason*: *KpV*

I will also use *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. George di Giovanni, in *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, Allen Wood (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

relation between the world and reason is true in Kant's ethics: practical reason dictates that *any* action that's a moral action will conform to the formal criteria of the Categorical Imperative. Everything else will fail to be intelligible as a moral action. Just as the categories dictate the necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being a possible object of our cognitive experience without entailing that we *in fact* experience anything, so too does the Categorical Imperative dictate the necessary and sufficient conditions for a maxim's being permissible to act from. The maxim must be universal in scope, necessary in modality, and communicable among rational beings.

In contrast to this emphasis of the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* on the 'formal' conceptual conditions and entailments of the moral law, in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant argues that we can identify particular 'material ends' of morality, i.e., ends we ought *in fact* to will.<sup>2</sup> Kant derives such ends from the fact that we are existent and embodied rational beings: our continued and fulfilled existence entails needs for physical, social,

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<sup>2</sup> Kant draws the *formal* vs. *material* distinction at *MM*, AK 6: 380 in reference to his division between an ethics of *rights* and an ethics of *ends*.

political, mental, and relational goods, goods that beings without bodies or a desire for happiness need not will at all except (tellingly) in relation to us.<sup>3</sup> A close reader of the *Groundwork* will not find this surprising when he remembers that, immediately after claiming that the good will is the only thing that possesses absolute worth, Kant defends the claim with a *reductio*. The *reductio* is premised on the idea that the “natural constitution of an organized being” is “constituted purposefully for life,” and practical reason has a “vocation” to produce a good will. Both of these claims presume that our being, both natural and moral, is teleologically ordered.<sup>4</sup> Borrowing the language of the second Categorical Imperative, Kant argues in the *Metaphysics of Morals* that we have a negative, perfect duty not to act contrary to our well-being, and a positive, imperfect duty to perfect ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

There are, then, two constraints Kant places on permissible action:

- Formal: That the maxim on which an agent acts can be made into a universal moral law for all rational
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<sup>3</sup> Else, for example, God could in good conscience leave Job to starve at every turn.

<sup>4</sup> This *reductio* covers AK 4: 395 – 96.

<sup>5</sup> MM, AK 6: 419. Kant defends the use of teleological language in the *Critique of Judgment*.

beings, and that the law can be willed to some extent;

- Material: That the agent "regards himself and every other human being as his end,"<sup>6</sup>

that is, considers the well-being of every human being *qua* finite rational being when choosing the ends he'll pursue.

For example, Kant would argue that it is my duty to consider how Pat's sense of self-worth is affected by lending him my wrenches in such a way as to make him feel inferior or indebted, rather than, for example, offering an exchange of, say, bodyguard duty in exchange for access to my tools for a day.<sup>7</sup> These and similar duties of virtue - kindness, gratitude, sympathy, on the positive side, and the avoidance of arrogance, spitefulness, and mockery on the negative - primarily involve a person's relation to himself as a moral subject (even when his actions secondarily involve others as objects), and so cannot, strictly speaking, be captured in the language of enforceable claim-rights, unless your humanity has rights against you.<sup>8</sup> And even if that idea makes sense, such

<sup>6</sup> *MM*, AK 6: 410.

<sup>7</sup> See *MM*, AK 6: 470 - 71.

<sup>8</sup> Kant thinks this is exactly what is going on (*MM*, AK 6: 417 - 418). Several contemporary thinkers believe this is

rights would be unenforceable.<sup>9</sup> Hence these duties are called duties of virtue rather than duties of justice or right.

However, it's hard to be the perfectly cosmopolitan benefactor of all when so many people in the world don't deserve good treatment. Consider the following passage from Kant's moral catechism:

- "Teacher: Now, if it were up to you to dispose of all happiness (possible in the world), would you keep it all for yourself or would you share it with your fellow human beings?
- "Pupil: I would share it with others and make them feel happy and satisfied too.
- "Teacher: Now that proves that you have a good enough *heart*; but let us see whether you have a good *head* to go with it. - Would you really give a lazy fellow soft cushions so that he could pass his life away in sweet idleness? Or would you see to it that a drunkard is never short of wine and whatever else he needs to get drunk? ...
- "Pupil: No, I would not."<sup>10</sup>

I agree with the pupil: the bum and the drunk don't deserve my beneficence. Or more exactly, to speak like Kant, they aren't worthy of the happiness my beneficence would help

absurd; see, for example, H.L.A. Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?" *Philosophical Review* (64) 1955: 175-82. On the other hand, I think Aristotle had a similar idea, which I explicated in chapter two as the relation between one's empirical and teleological self.

<sup>9</sup> Well ... ask that arms-dealer Cephalus how well he sleeps at night.

<sup>10</sup> MM, AK 6: 480 - 81.

bring about. Any impartial rational spectator would think the same.<sup>11</sup> Yet ... *et tu quoque?*

- "Teacher: But as for yourself, would you at least have no scruples about first providing yourself with everything that you could count in your happiness?"
- "Pupil: I would have none."
- "Teacher: But doesn't it occur to you to ask, again, whether you are yourself worthy of happiness?"<sup>12</sup>

Like every great teacher of ethics, Kant sees that ethical arguments ultimately have an *ad hominem* component.

But to the quick. The first point I wish to make is that, as Kant (and other Natural Law jurists?) recognize, our nature as embodied rational beings comes attached with ends we ought to pursue. Consider, for example, Kant's argument that we can determine *a priori* of embodied rational beings that their ultimate end, the *summum bonum*, is a synthesis of moral and non-moral interests. While the 'purpose' of practical reason is the production of the good will, this cannot be the complete good of an embodied

<sup>11</sup> As Kant remarks in the first paragraph of the *Groundwork*, AK 4: 393: "... an impartial rational spectator can take no delight in seeing the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced with no feature of a pure and good will, so that a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy."

<sup>12</sup> MM, AK 6: 481.

rational being on whom nature places other demands.<sup>13</sup> Our highest good must be synthetic, a combination of moral and non-moral goods. Kant argues in the second *Critique* that the formal principle of this end is moral – the absolute conformity of the will to the moral law – which gives unconditioned (moral) worth to the complete good. Its material principle is happiness – the complete satisfaction of all of the ends of desire – and this principle gives natural (conditioned) worth to the complete good. Since possession of a good will is a necessary condition of worthiness to be happy, deserved happiness is happiness got in exact proportion to virtue.

The second point is that, as Kant concludes in the second *Critique*, finite and rational beings have (1) a perfect duty to will to be worthy of happiness and (2) an imperfect duty to seek happiness (but only in proportion to our moral worth) – and that these constitute ends we are obligated to pursue rather than formal *conditions* for the possibility of moral action. Considered as a synthetic unity, these ends together constitute the object of freedom for finite and rational creatures, the “complete” good, or *summum bonum*,

<sup>13</sup> Kant argues this already in the *Groundwork* at AK 4: 396, foreshadowing the antinomy of practical reason in the second *Critique*.

that which we are always already willing when we are willing morally.<sup>14</sup> As Kant puts it,

there is only one obligation of virtue, whereas there are many duties of virtue; for there are indeed many objects that it is also our duty to have as ends, but there is only one virtuous disposition, the subjective determining ground to fulfill one's duty ...<sup>15</sup>

That "one obligation of virtue" is the perfect duty to perfect oneself as a moral agent, to be the person perfectly motivated by the idea of duty.<sup>16</sup> Whether there are any perfectly virtuous agents in the 'subjective determining ground' of their will is a question Kant doesn't take up until the *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. We will take it up shortly in response to a problem created by the next point.

That point is that the *ad hominem* contained in Kant's moral catechism only works if we are indeed justified in denying beneficence to those unworthy of it. We might never know this about another human being, and so never acquire reasons to deny our beneficence to others, but a

<sup>14</sup> See Kant's discussion of the Antinomy of Practical Reason in the *KpV*, AK 5: 107 – 119.

<sup>15</sup> *MM*, AK 6: 410.

<sup>16</sup> This is consistent with Kant's assertion in the *Groundwork* that reason's "unconditional purpose" to produce the good will can "limit" and reduce the "conditional purpose" of happiness "below zero" as it seeks to attain that purpose, AK 4: 396.

conscientious Kantian will always check, first, that others are (so far as can be known) worthy of our beneficence, and second, that we present ourselves to others as worthy of their beneficence. Kant will interpret these two principles not merely as moral principles, but also as contrary principles driving the psychology of human relationships. On the one hand, Kant defines friendship – an ideal human relationship – in terms of how the worth and beneficence of two moral agents interact with one another. On the other hand, Kant argues that a failure to bestow beneficence in proportion to worth is to cause a loss of respect, of ourselves for another, or of another towards ourselves, and “once respect is violated, its presence is irretrievably lost, even though the outward marks of it (manners) are brought back to their former course.”<sup>17</sup> This one point explains Kant’s pessimistic remarks regarding the vicissitudes of human relationships and especially about the fragility of friendship. Ultimately, perhaps, the fact that these vicissitudes follow from our *failure* to be properly motivated by duty in the ‘subjective determining ground of the will’ will provide us with a defense of

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<sup>17</sup> MM, AK 6: 470.

Kant's oft-maligned treatment of friendship as a naïve 'sharing of secrets.'

### **3. Friendship**

Kant defines friendship as "the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect."<sup>18</sup> Happily, he gives this definition an entire sentence of explanation:

It is easy to see that this is an ideal of participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being through the morally good will that unites them, and even though it does not produce the complete happiness of life, the adoption of this ideal in their disposition toward each other makes them deserving of happiness; hence human beings have a duty of friendship.<sup>19</sup>

The most important fact to notice here is that Kant is describing friendship as a concrete instance of the *summum bonum*. The end of our human relationships, the end we are always willing when we love other persons, is the worthy enjoyment of another's company.<sup>20</sup> This enjoyment is rooted in and concomitant with our working for our friend's well-being, and is limited only by the degree to which our will is good. The apex of human sociality, in other words, assuming friendships involve exclusive or preferential beneficence, is loyalty bound by mutual respect.

<sup>18</sup> *MM*, AK 6: 469.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Kant asserts this at *MM*, AK 6: 471, §47; but see below.

Let's parse that out. Without pretending to an exhaustive classification, we can easily separate human relationships into the following kinds:

1. Relationships involving respect without the practical adoption of another's well-being as your own;
2. Relationships involving beneficence without mutual respect; or
3. Relationships involving beneficence and respect in unequal and/or independent proportions.

I have a relationship of type (1) with Mahatma Ghandi (who's dead, and so beyond the reach of my beneficence), a relationship of type (2) towards my neighbor's wonderful children, and a relationship of type (3) towards my parents, whom I respect more than I'll ever be able to benefit (life being an infinite debt). On the other hand, Kant thinks friendship constitutes a fourth kind of relationship, namely,

4. Relationships in which (a) the mutual happiness of the agents is *dependent* on the good character of each agent, and (b) the love and respect of each agent toward the other is *equal*.

Because of this, there are two ways in which human relationships can fail to be friendly. On the one hand, as in cases (1) and (2), love and respect are not related in dependent manner. On the other hand, love and respect can be present in an unequal mixture, as in case (3). Kant thinks such relationships are better described as a relation between a *superior* and an *inferior* than as a friendship. Indeed, Kant believes that although friendship presupposes mutual beneficence, its actual bestowal creates an obligation of gratitude in its recipient and superiority in the benefactor, and this destruction of equality between friends can weaken the friendship:

If one of them accepts a favor from the other, then he may well be able to count on equality of love, but not in respect; for he sees himself obviously a step lower in being under obligation without being able to impose obligation in turn.<sup>21</sup>

Many of Kant's remarks about friendship deal with the manner in which we should limit the intimacy we have with our friends precisely in order to preserve the proper relation of love and respect that must exist between friends.

Unfortunately, that our friend loves and respects us as we love and respect him is something we must presume as a

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<sup>21</sup> MM, AK 6: 471.

condition for the possibility of friendship; it is a moral *ding an sich* we can think but not know.<sup>22</sup> As the moral life itself hopes for happiness (in proportion to one's worth) from we know not where, so too does even the best friendship rely on the presumption of - perhaps 'faith in' - a morally good will in the other as a condition for the possibility of worthy beneficence, else the friends come to regard themselves as chumps or free-riders. If that's correct, then friendship requires hope, and that hope is an anagogical figure for the moral life as a whole. More on this later, when we'll need to read the analogy back into friendship from the other direction.

### **Moral Friendship**

Kant goes on to distinguish the "Ideal" friendship just discussed from "moral" friendship, which he defines as "the complete confidence of two persons in revealing their secret judgments and feelings to each other, as far as such disclosures are consistent with mutual respect."<sup>23</sup> He mentions two differences between the two kinds of friendship. First, whereas confidence in or trust in the good will of the friend is a mark of ideal friendship, Kant

<sup>22</sup> MM, AK 6: 469 – 70.

<sup>23</sup> MM, AK 6: 471.

has made it the genus of moral friendship, as if moral friendship were simply a special species of trust we can have in another person. Indeed, Kant's discussion of moral friendship bears this out, concentrating on the fact that a true friend is someone in whom one can, without anxiety, confide one's secrets.<sup>24</sup> Second, Kant explicitly contrasts the possibility of each kind of friendship. Ideal friendship is simply an "idea," with this supposedly meant in the technical sense of a regulative ideal that allows us to measure the worth of actual relationships. It is "unattainable in practice,"<sup>25</sup> whereas moral friendship "is not just an ideal but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection."<sup>26</sup>

Two of Kant's arguments in this section are relevant to understanding these distinctions. On the one hand, he argues that insofar as we lack epistemic access to the thoughts of our friends, friendship is the equivalent of the noumenal *ding an sich* – that which we can think but never assert as actual (or actually know) – and thus can

<sup>24</sup> MM, AK 6: 472. Explicit criticism of the role of 'intimacy' in friendship and particularly the 'secrets view' of friendship can be found in Cocking and Kennett's "Friendship and the Self," *Ethics* 108 (1998): 502-27 and their "Friendship and Moral Danger," *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2000): 278-96.

<sup>25</sup> MM, AK 6: 469.

<sup>26</sup> MM, AK 6: 471.

never be said to be attained even as it functions as a standard guiding our judgment of other relationships.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it seems that we can ascertain the malice of some human beings - their ill-willing directed at our well-being - and the akratic weakness of still others in failing to promote our well-being. The unstated implication seems to be that, after some period of testing we can determine whether someone doesn't harm and actually protects our goods and secrets. In this way we can determine the reality of moral friendship.<sup>28</sup>

We should note that both of these arguments focus on the character of the other: whether his good will can be known, and whether he is discreet, that is, will not divulge personal information about his friend. If ideal friendship

<sup>27</sup> MM, AK 6: 470. "... how can a human being ascertain whether one of the elements requisite to this duty (e.g., benevolence toward each other) is equal in the disposition of each of the friends? ... how can he be sure that if the love of one is stronger, he may not, just because of this, forfeit something of the other's respect, so that it will be difficult for both to bring love and respect into that equal balance required for friendship?"

<sup>28</sup> MM, AK 6: 472: "Every human being has his secrets and dare not confide blindly in others, partly because of a base cast of mind in most human beings to use them to one's disadvantage and partly because many people are indiscreet or incapable of judging what may or may not be repeated. The necessary combination of qualities is seldom found in one person ... [but?] this (merely moral friendship) is not just an ideal but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection."

is impossible, it's impossible for the same reasons on the that led the 'student' in Kant's moral catechism to deny that he should give his beneficence himself in addition to bums and drunks: no one passes every test.

I think there is a better story to be told here, and that Kant has the tools available to write it. It is only the fact that human beings do *not* have good wills that make loyalty and trust the defining marks of friendship.<sup>29</sup> If others always treated us with respect and looked out for our well-being, trust and loyalty would be guaranteed. If no one has a good will, on the other hand, then none of us is worthy of either happiness or friendship. Universal corruption in the 'subjective determining ground' of our will would make genuine friendship between men *de facto* impossible even as it stood in judgment of our failed relationships.

This line of argument makes it sound as if the best friends are discreet friends because, like bureaucrats, it's best to keep those who know our dirty secrets within

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<sup>29</sup> It is for this reason, I think, that the concept of a robot betraying the good of a human is so far from the minds of most characters in Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*. Unless people can and do act otherwise than they ought, the concept of persevering in care for another's good lacks (Kant would say) moral value: it requires us to sacrifice nothing in its pursuit.

range of our knife. Perhaps. Against this, however, we should keep in mind the following passage:

From a moral point of view it is, of course, a duty for one of the friends to point out the other's faults to him; this is in the other's best interests and is therefore a duty of love.<sup>30</sup>

Kant here indicates that a good friend is someone who will both deny his friend undeserved happiness as well as one who will be happy with his friend in the goodness the friend has. In other words, your best friend is nothing other than the moral law in human form.

So: the classic interpretation of Kant's definition of moral friendship puts emphasis on the wrong part of the definition, on the part that emphasizes how *prudent* it is to reveal our faults to others. Better, I think, to imagine the 'confidence' of moral friendship as the practical hope involved in revealing yourself, in the 'subjective determining ground' of your will, to the moral law personified, knowing that this person will treat you with love and respect and make you as happy as you ought to be. Maybe more.

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<sup>30</sup> MM, AK 6: 470.

#### 4. Friendship as a Figure of Kant's *Summum Bonum*

As discussed above, Kant argues that neither the mere satisfaction of all the ends of appetite, nor the mere possession of a good will, is a sufficient account of the good for finite and rational beings such as we are. As finite and rational beings we have a perfect duty to will to be worthy of happiness and an imperfect duty to seek happiness, though only in proportion to that worthiness. Together, these ends constitute the *summum bonum*, the 'complete' and 'highest' good for finite and rational creatures. When we combine this notion with Kant's value theory, we get a surprising result.

Kant begins the *Groundwork* by arguing that all good things are good in relation to the good will because the good will "seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy."<sup>31</sup> Even those things that are naturally good *simpliciter* - say, life, sex, food - are good *for us* only conditionally, namely, on the condition that the will of the person enjoying these goods is morally good. It follows that if a person's will is not good, natural goods are not good *for him*: he must become good so

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<sup>31</sup> Kant, *GW*, AK 4: 393.

as to earn that worthiness by which natural goods are worthily enjoyed.

As we argued in section three, Kant's concept of friendship can be understood as a particular instance of the formal relation he calls the *summum bonum*. The desire to enjoy the thoughts, company and security of others is a natural good, as Kant says,<sup>32</sup> but it need not be thought an unconditional good, since no natural good is unconditionally good. Rather, the respect we owe any person who plays the role of an object in our maxims constitutes the formal or moral component of the desire for friendship. Friendship, on this account, is conditionally good and can be *per accidens* bad, depending on the moral status of the wills of the friends. The problem that comes from all this is that, if each of us lacks a morally good will, then all of our relationships of friendship are fundamentally faulty.

Support for this idea can be found in Kant's notion of radical evil. In his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant argues that there is an ultimate subjective ground of our maxims, one that explains why the particular maxims of one being, who is either good or evil, may be

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<sup>32</sup> MM, AK 6: 470.

good and evil at different times. This "first ground" is called one's disposition.<sup>33</sup> A disposition that allows a particular evil maxim to be willed even once has shown that it is open to subordinating an ethical incentive to a sensuous one and is therefore corrupt. Even if its particular actions are mostly good, the "intelligible" character of such a will is yet evil.<sup>34</sup> The propensity to evil, the tendency to invert the ethical order of the incentives of the will, is radical both because it evinces the corruption of the ground of all our particular maxims and because, as a noumenal ground outside of time, it is inextirpable by human powers.<sup>35</sup> That everyone's disposition is corrupt Kant (like Jesus and Socrates) demonstrates *ad hominem*: let everyone without sin throw a stone.

### **Friendship and Hope**

What we need, then, is some way of imagining what a human relationship defined by equal love and respect will look like if its agents (a) are both corrupt in their disposition and (b) strive to be otherwise. We'll turn to the third chapter of *Genesis* for help, while remembering that friendship is an image of the *summum bonum*. We need

<sup>33</sup> Kant, *Religion*, AK 6: 20 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Kant, *Religion*, AK 6: 31.

<sup>35</sup> Kant, *Religion*, AK 6: 37.

to reconstruct the relation between the wills of Adam and Eve at each step of their fall and to consider the moral relationship between them at each step of their fall.<sup>36</sup>

There is a brief time during which Eve has eaten of the tree of knowledge, and thus committed the first mortal sin, but Adam has not. At this point Adam contains within his being, including his body, the promise of happiness for Eve (for he is her completeness as she was made to be his), while Eve is morally unworthy of the happiness her prelapsarian spouse promises her. We could not call Adam evil on account of the sin of Eve. He is still naturally good on his own account, and he is her good, though clearly she does not deserve this natural good. Hence he is "conditionally good" for her, as Kant would say, with this meaning that his natural goodness to Eve is dependent on her worthiness of her husband. Yet Eve no longer possesses that condition.

Once Eve has fallen, Adam has not become evil (he could still satisfy her every moral desire), but he cannot satisfy her immoral desires and remain just. If this were a permanent state, we could imagine a point at which Adam

<sup>36</sup> I've told this story before in "Good Sex on Kantian Grounds: A Reply to Alan Soble," *Essays in Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2007.

would have to deny a desire of Eve's because the desire was immoral (that is, to be picturesque, he could deny her immoral desire that he should eat an apple by refusing to eat it): their *flesh*, let us say, a similitude of the complete good, has become divided. This division of the complete good is contingent because it need not have happened. Once it does happen, however, it must necessarily hold not only the promise of future pain for Eve (some of her desires ought not be met) but also Eve's shame in the knowledge that such denials are just. Perhaps Eve

sees in this a lack of the respect [s]he expected from [her] friend and thinks that [she] has either already lost or is in constant danger of losing something of [her] friend's respect, since [s]he is observed and secretly criticized by him; and even the fact that [her] friend observes [her] and finds fault with [her] will seem in itself offensive.<sup>37</sup>

Those who are corrupt in their disposition take offense at the work of justice. Of that, let us not speak. On the other hand, if she had been contrite, Eve could have lived for a time with her unfallen husband, whose very presence, though painful, would have allowed only the satisfaction of her moral desires. In contrition she could have given thanks for this.

<sup>37</sup> Kant, *MM*, AK 6: 470.

*That*, I think, must be the final word on Kant's theory of friendship. We are surrounded by the promise of happiness from the world around us and the persons in it, even as there are times when we are not worthy of enjoying each other's company. We no longer possess *that condition*, for in a postlapsarian world even natural goodness can be a temptation to evil for an unworthy will. In *this world*, our best hope is for a friend who sees in us an opportunity to exercise his duty "to point out [our] faults to" us because "this is in the other's [our] best interests," i.e., it is a "duty of love."<sup>38</sup> The object of our hope is the person we can trust to fulfill this duty even as he protects our sense of self-worth. When such trust is mutual - and such a thing is as rare as it is fine - then we have *in fact* "the complete confidence of two persons in revealing their secret judgments and feelings to each other, as far as such disclosures are consistent with mutual respect." This is how we strive for an ideal, the condition which we left a long time ago, but which retains the power to command us to our good and judge our attempts to reach it.

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<sup>38</sup> *MM*, AK 6: 470.

## CHAPTER 5. KIERKEGAARD'S TASK OF LOVE: EROS, PHILIA, AGAPE

### 1. Introduction

As Søren Kierkegaard never tires of repeating, – especially to assistant professors (and their students) with a penchant for making theses – “the way to the essentially Christian goes through offense.”<sup>1</sup> *Works of Love*, for example, contains a threefold criticism of the Aristotelian conception of virtue friendship that, until recently, has been less than well received.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Kierkegaard argues that the ‘pagan’ model of friendship:

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<sup>1</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. and ed. Howard and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995) p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> This is especially clear in the largely negative reception received by *Works of Love*. Theodore Adorno thinks that Kierkegaard’s presentation of *agape* in *WOL* as indifferent to the uniqueness of persons is “close ... to callousness,” in ‘On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love,’ *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 8, 413 – 29 (reprinted in D.W. Conway, ed., *Søren Kierkegaard: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, vol. 2. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 7 – 21. K.E. Løgstrup argues that *WOL* is “a brilliantly thought out system of safeguards against being forced into a close relationship with other people” in *The Ethical Demand*, Ed. H. Fink and A. MacIntyre, Trans. T. Jensen and G. Puckering (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). Lorraine Smith Pangle’s *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), Sandra Lynch’s *Philosophy and Friendship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), and Mark Vernon have all recently argued that Kierkegaard’s position on friendship is

(F1): is not a legitimate subject of ethical interest;

(F2): would contain ethically dangerous elements if it were; and

(F3): is inherently unable to make good on its claim to be a necessary component of human *eudaimonia*.

In contrast, Kierkegaard also argues,

(F4): *Agape* ("neighbor-love") is immune to the kinds of deficiencies inherent in *eros* and *philia* (and is for that reason a better candidate for *eudaimonia*).

In what follows, I will do two things. Taking Aristotle's account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a paradigm case of 'pagan' friendship, I will first explain and evaluate Kierkegaard's arguments for (F1) and (F2), while mentioning other thinkers who have held similar

ridiculously negative, with the latter going so far as to claim that Kierkegaard argues for "an outright rejection of friendship as such" in *The Philosophy of Friendship* (London: Palgrave, 2005) pp. 77 - 78. Only recently has this traditional interpretation of Kierkegaard's position on friendship been challenged, most notably by M. Jamie Ferreira in *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001). Defending Kierkegaard against some of these charges (while also arguing that Kierkegaard's criticisms of 'pagan' *eros* largely attack a straw man) is John Lippit, "Cracking the Mirror: On Kierkegaard's Concerns About Friendship," *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 61 (2007): 131 - 150.

positions.<sup>3</sup> Though I conclude that (F1) and (F2) fail to address Aristotelian ethics on its own terms, I also argue that attention to Kierkegaard's heretofore overlooked emphasis on *deception* and *risk* make his arguments for (F3) and (F4) at least initially plausible criticisms of the Aristotelian model of friendship. Though I ultimately conclude that all of Kierkegaard's arguments fail, they do so while addressing, in a systematic and focused way, historical issues that contemporary philosophy of friendship has only recently rediscovered.

## **2. The Failure of 'Pagan' *Eros* and *Philia***

Let's briefly recall the fundamental features of Aristotle's conception of friendship. Taking virtue friendship as paradigmatic, Aristotle held that a friend:

1. Wishes and does good to his friend for his friend's sake.
2. Wishes for the friend to exist and to live, for the friend's sake.
3. Spends time with his friend.
4. Makes the same choices as his friend.

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<sup>3</sup> These historical connections play a part in my final evaluation of Kierkegaard.

5. Shares in his friend's distress and enjoyment.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle adds that "we must do kindnesses" - that is, at least (1) - (3), and perhaps (5) - "for friends more than for strangers."<sup>5</sup> Aristotle's explanation of this fact has its ground in his view that *eunoia* - the recognition of and affective response to some feature of a person we find valuable - is the efficient cause of *philia*.<sup>6</sup> We love our friends in response to their perceived worth.

Kierkegaard argues that this model of love - covering both *eros* and *philia* - has three characteristics that, taken together, distinguish erotic love and friendship from Christian *agape*.<sup>7</sup>

1. Friendship and erotic love involve *exclusive* caring, i.e., involve caring for particular persons and not others.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *EN* 9.4.

<sup>5</sup> *EN* 9.3, 1165b 34

<sup>6</sup> *EN* 9.4.

<sup>7</sup> These characteristics have also been discussed by Graham Smith, in "Kierkegaard: Responsibility to the Other," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (2007): 181 - 97.

<sup>8</sup> "Christian love teaches us to love all people, unconditionally all. Just as unconditionally and powerfully as erotic love intensifies in the direction that there is but one and only one beloved" (*WOL* p. 49).

2. Friendship and erotic love involve *special caring*, i.e., caring for some more than for others, on the basis of a unique set of features the friend possesses.<sup>9</sup>

3. Friendship and erotic love are founded on inclination (*affection*), and thus on forces over which we have little (if any) direct control, either in their appearance, cessation, or direction.<sup>10</sup>

*Agape*, on the other hand, is distinguished from this model of love in its *scope*, its *function*, and its *ground*. Rather than being directed at a particular person exclusively, *agape*'s object is the 'neighbor' – and that's everyone. Rather than involving exclusive caring, *agape* requires us to seek the highest good possible for the neighbor: virtue, if you're Aristotle, and salvation, if you're Kierkegaard (or Aquinas, who shares this particular thesis with

<sup>9</sup> "However joyous ... spontaneous love, can be itself, precisely in its most beautiful moment it still feels a need to bind itself, if possible, even more securely. Therefore the two swear an oath, swear fidelity or friendship to each other" (*WOL* p. 29).

<sup>10</sup> "Erotic love is based on a drive that, transfigured into an inclination, has its highest ... unconditioned expression in this—there is but one and only one beloved in the whole world ..." (*WOL* p. 49). "The issue between the poet and Christianity can be defined very precisely as follows: *Erotic love and friendship are preferential love and the passion of preferential love ...*" (*WOL* p. 52).

Kierkegaard).<sup>11</sup> *Agape* distributes care equitably. Finally, Kierkegaard unabashedly argues that *agape* is founded on a *command* rather than an affection or passion: "You shall love your neighbor." If that seems forced, remember that Kant made essentially the same point when he argued that the ground of practical love must be independent of inclination if it is to be required by the moral law – which is always expressed, to us, as an imperative.<sup>12</sup>

The first two characteristics that Kierkegaard associates with erotic love and friendship are uncontroversial: a friend displays *exclusive* and *partial* care for her friend. Although Kierkegaard tends to underestimate the role deliberation and choice play in friendship, (3) nevertheless captures the fact that, even for Aristotle, both *eros* and *philia* have their roots in an affective response to some valued feature of a friend. While the degree to which we have control over these responses is a matter of some debate, Kierkegaard's position that our affection for the good is a passion rather than a choice is neither unusual nor rare: Aquinas, for one, held the same view.<sup>13</sup> And if all desire is for what is, or appears to be,

<sup>11</sup> *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 6, ad. 1

<sup>12</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, AK 4: 432 – 33.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ST* I-II, Q. 26 a. 2.

good, then everything we love as good is loved insofar as its goodness calls forth, *deserves* (or claims to), our esteem. Kierkegaard's term for *eros* and *philia* – "passionate preference" – captures these three features rather well: *eros* and *philia* require exclusive, partial affection for a particular other in response to some unique set of features that (we think) merits our affection.

#### **(F1) Friendship is Amoral**

In chapter IIB, "You Shall Love the Neighbor," Kierkegaard attacks this model of friendship on several grounds. His first claim is that "erotic love and friendship ... contain no moral task."<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard may have Aristotle's account of the value of friendship in mind here. Aristotle opens Book 8 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* by asserting (a) that friendship "is an excellence, or implies excellence" – that is, is or involves virtue, and (b) that friendship is the most valuable and necessary external good insofar as friendship is an activity whose particular aims are constitutive and enabling of the good life as such.<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard disagrees:

Erotic love and friendship are good fortune. In the poetic sense, it is a stroke of good fortune ... to fall

<sup>14</sup> *WOL*, p. 50 – 51.

<sup>15</sup> *EN* 8.1, 1154b 3 – 4.

in love, to find this one and only beloved. ... At most, then, the task is to be properly grateful for one's good fortune. But the task can never be to be obliged to find the beloved or to find this friend. ... Therefore, the task depends upon whether fortune will give one the task, but in the moral sense this simply expresses that there is no task.<sup>16</sup>

Kierkegaard's idea here is that, even if it's true that friendships are a source of ethical obligations, we have no independent obligations to seek friends.<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, in contrast, argued that human beings are by nature political animals because we have natural drives and inclinations to seek the society of others; thus deficiency in social graces unfits us for a fully flourishing life in human society, just as a lack of worthy friends makes such a life unachievable.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, he thought that, if the point of ethics is to be good rather than to make judgments about it, it is precisely an ethical task to seek good friends – a necessary condition for which is to become such a one – both as a requisite to our full moral development and as a component of the good life itself. Be this as it may, Kierkegaard's deontological objection is that however good

<sup>16</sup> *WOL*, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Smith, p. 185.

<sup>18</sup> As Aristotle says in *EN* 1.7, 1097b 8 – 11: "By self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship." Cf. Aristotle's *Politics*, 1.2.

such relationships may be, however necessary they are for a minimally choiceworthy human existence, friendship itself remains *desirable* rather than *obligatory*. As Kant would say, even friendship is a qualified rather than an absolute good.

An action or relation can be the source of an obligation, Kierkegaard suggests, if it can be commanded.<sup>19</sup> Friendship fails that test. Imagine that, like a one-eyed man in the land of the blind, you are the uniquely virtuous person in Copenhagen. Friendship being a form of love, its existence depends on the prior existence of persons worthy of your affection. Just as it is compatible with your being a brilliant philosopher that you haven't anyone to call your 'dear reader' - just as it is compatible with being the Son of God that you haven't anywhere to lay your head - so too is it compatible with your being ethically faultless that you haven't any friends. Perhaps there's no one worthy of your attention, no one who excites your *eunoia* (like Dr. Manhattan in Moore and Gibbon's *Watchmen*).<sup>20</sup> To suggest, in such circumstances, that your failure to be excited is a

<sup>19</sup> "But the task can never be to be obliged to find the beloved ... On the other hand, when one shall love the neighbor, then the task is, the moral task ..." (*WOL*, p. 51).

<sup>20</sup> Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 1995).

breach of some obligation - you *shall* have friends! - is absurd. Just as comic, on the other hand, as someone insisting on her *right* to be your friend or lover in virtue of her qualities.

All this is to say that it's possible for something to be a bad state of affairs - call it loneliness, though existentialists can be more creative - and for it not to be wrong on a person's part that it exist. Going to the dentist is like that too. Aristotle says that the fully ethical life consists in realizing *eudaimonia* - being good and having sufficient external goods and fortune in society.<sup>21</sup> Kierkegaard, on the other hand, takes the Kantian position that being good requires (though it certainly isn't exhausted by) principled abstention from evil deeds. Thus, the soundness of Kierkegaard's argument depends on the outcome of a meta-ethical debate about the correct priority of *the good* and *the right*, as W.D. Ross put it.

#### **(F2) Passionate Preferences are Fundamentally Forms of Self-Love**

Kierkegaard's second argument asserts that "Christianity has misgivings about erotic love and friendship simply because preferential love in passion or passionate

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<sup>21</sup> EN 1.7.

preference is actually another form of self-love."<sup>22</sup> It is important to see at the outset what Kierkegaard is and is not claiming here. He is careful to distinguish the claim,

1. Passionate preference is essentially a form of self-love

from the claim that

2. Passionate preference is essentially selfish  
for not every instance of self-love is selfish. Aristotle, for instance, drew a distinction between good and bad self-love: good self-love is love for what is good for you in fact, a truly ethical motive to seek what is noble and in the interest of your 'self' understood in a teleological and normative sense.<sup>23</sup> Bad self-love gratifies your immediate inclinations in a vicious way. Kierkegaard is not concerned with *this* distinction, though he mentions it in passing.<sup>24</sup> Neither does he argue that preference is

<sup>22</sup> *WOL*, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 9.8: "In all the actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share in what is noble. In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self; but in the sense in which most men are so, he ought not."

<sup>24</sup> *WOL*, p. 55: "[Christianity] is well aware that there is a self-love that one must call unfaithful self-love, but it is also just as aware that there is a self-love that must be called devoted self-love."

iterative, which would be simply false.<sup>25</sup> What Kierkegaard is after, rather, is the claim that the *admiration of another* that is a necessary condition of friendship (if the one admired is a *friend*) is at the same time an implied demand for reciprocity. Friendship is self-serving if not badly selfish.

Kierkegaard's argument for this depends on the Aristotelian position that *eunoia* (admiration) alone is not sufficient for friendship; *eunoia* must be reciprocal in friendship. It follows, as Aquinas argued, that in order to admire Jones *qua beloved* or *qua friend*, one must admire *at the same time* Jones *qua reciprocal lover of oneself*. One necessarily loves a friend as a reciprocal admirer.<sup>26</sup> As Kierkegaard puts it,

to admire another person is certainly not self-love; but to be loved by the one and only admired one, would not this relation turn back in a selfish way into the *I* who loves - his other *I*? And so it is also with friendship. To admire another person is certainly not self-love, but to be the one and only friend of this one and only admired person - would not this relation

<sup>25</sup> The *akratic* individual, for one, doesn't prefer that he prefers *x*.

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas argued for this thesis. See *III, Sent. d. 29, a. 3, ad 2*, as well as *ST II-II, q. 23 a. 1 c.* See also Paul De Letter's discussion in "Hope and Charity in St. Thomas," *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 13 (1950): 204 - 48.

turn back in an alarming way into the *I* from which we proceeded?<sup>27</sup>

this view regards loving as a demand (reciprocal love is the demand) and being loved (reciprocal love) as an earthly good, as temporal - and yet, alas, as the highest bliss.<sup>28</sup>

Kierkegaard could here be suggesting, in connection with his first argument, that insofar as erotic and friendly love are forms of self-love they are also amoral by virtue of failing to be obligatory. Self-love is what is presupposed by the *Royal Law* - 'You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*' - rather than commanded by it.<sup>29</sup> Yet this interpretation is not only contradicted by Kierkegaard's book, but it is also surely false.<sup>30</sup> That is in part what a claim of loyalty amounts to - an obligation that your beloved show you reciprocal care - and you can fail your friends and lovers in this. A better suggestion is to focus on Kierkegaard's weak assertion that

<sup>27</sup> *WOL*, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> *WOL*, p. 237. Later on this page Kierkegaard refers his argument back to p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> *WOL*, p. 17: "When it is said, 'You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*,' this contains what is presupposed, that every person loves himself ... Is it possible for anyone to misunderstand this, as if it were Christianity's intention to proclaim self-love as a prescriptive right? Indeed, on the contrary, it is Christianity's intention to wrest self-love away from human beings."

<sup>30</sup> *WOL*, p. 12: "Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is an object of your love has a claim upon an expression of it also in words if it actually moves you inwardly. The emotion is not yours but belongs to the other; the expression is your debt to him ..."

"Christianity has *misgivings* about erotic love and friendship ... [because they are] actually another form of self-love." Here the concern is about the *temptation* inherent in these relationships to degenerate into a constant exchange of assurances and admiration.<sup>31</sup> Insofar as vanity is a vice, erotic love and friendship are at least *near occasions* of sin.

Recently, however, some have argued that Kierkegaard's Christian misgivings about erotic and friendly love are better understood as a threat to the genuine alterity, independence and autonomy of the beloved. Kierkegaard seems to give evidence for this claim when he writes that while the friend is another-self, another-*I*, the object of *agape* is another-you.<sup>32</sup> As Smith puts it, in erotic love and friendship, "at best, the other becomes a willing, but conditional, participant in the friend's conception of well-being and self-worth; at worst, the other is the instrument of the friend's own self-concern, and the unrecognized and devalued victim of selfishness."<sup>33</sup> The threat inherent even in virtuous friendship, then, is that the other is conceived as a quasi-Nietzschean mirror

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *WOL*, 155-6, 237, 267.

<sup>32</sup> *WOL*, p. 57.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, p. 192.

whereby I perceive my own self-worth – and Aristotle indeed thinks the virtuous friend fulfills that function.<sup>34</sup> This is simply not possible with neighbor-love, whose ‘shall’ commands us to seek the good of the other regardless of their qualities. Only neighbor-love can demand that we love our enemies.<sup>35</sup>

Despite these concerns, Aristotle insists that virtuous friends are not good as *mere* means, but are pleasant and useful as well as noble – in fact, because they are noble – and that they should be.<sup>36</sup> Friends are not knickknacks: part of what makes them good for their own sake is their being good for ours, as being beneficial is a better-making property of friends. Furthermore, it seems right to say with Aristotle that insofar as virtuous friends love each other for their own sake, both homogenization and abuse of the sort Smith is concerned with are already incompatible with virtue friendship. If these are Kierkegaard’s ‘Christian’ worries, in other words, they’re not uniquely Christian anxieties. With some misgivings, then, we should conclude that there’s not much force in Kierkegaard’s objection that self-love tends to uniformity, uniformity in

<sup>34</sup> See Aristotle, *EN*, 9.9 and *Magna Moralia* 1213a 10 – 26.

<sup>35</sup> *WOL*, pp. 54 – 56.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 8.2 – 8.3.

use or abuse, for it's the essence of justice, as Hamlet says, to use each according to his worth - even if charity treats a person better.

## 2. Interim

Contrary to often made criticisms of Kierkegaard, he never claims that exclusivity and passionate preference are bad in themselves, but merely - if Christianity is true - that they are bad if they haven't been transformed and redeemed by *agape*.

If in order to love the neighbor you would have to begin by giving up loving those for whom you have preference, the word 'neighbor' would be the greatest deception ever conceived. Moreover, it would be a contradiction, since inasmuch as the neighbor is all people surely no one can be excluded ...<sup>37</sup>

Rather, he argues, Christianity is fundamentally an inversion of an Aristotelian privileging of special relationships over universal obligations. Christianity, rather,

is so far from being a matter of first having to get busy to find the beloved that, on the contrary, in loving the beloved we are first to love the neighbor. To drives and inclination this is no doubt a strange, chilling inversion ... Your wife must first and foremost be to you your neighbor; that she is your wife is then

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<sup>37</sup> *WOL*, p. 61.

a more precise specification of your particular relationship to each other.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed,

the wife and the friend are not loved in the same way, nor the friend and the neighbor, but this is not an essential dissimilarity, because the fundamental similarity is implicit in the category 'neighbor.' The category 'neighbor' is like the category 'human being.' Each one of us is a human being and then in turn the distinctive individual that he is in particular, but to be a human being is the fundamental category. ... Thus Christianity has nothing against the husband's loving his wife in particular, but he must never love her in particular in such a way that she is an exception to being the neighbor that every human being is ...<sup>39</sup>

This is more than sufficient to refute Mark Vernon's claim that *Works of Love* contains "an outright rejection of friendship as such," and Løgstrup's claim that *Works of Love* is "a brilliantly thought out system of safeguards against being forced into a close relationship with other people."<sup>40</sup>

The book does, however, want to "seize [passionate preference], purify it, sanctify it, and in this way make everything new while everything is still old."<sup>41</sup> Insofar as this is offensive, *Works of Love* employs that incomparable

<sup>38</sup> *WOL*, p. 141.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. footnote 2.

<sup>41</sup> *WOL*, p. 145.

Kierkegaardian sugar to make the pill go down: seduction and irony. Let me explain.

It hasn't been emphasized in the literature - excluding Ferreira - that Kierkegaard is particularly concerned about the effect that Aristotle's grounding of *eros* and *philia* on preferential passion has on their qualifications to be what Kierkegaard calls the 'highest' good - what Aristotle called, at least in the case of friendship, the greatest external good. In fact, before Kierkegaard engages in the arguments discussed above, the initial chapters of both halves of *Works of Love* focus on (1) the impact deception and risk have on non-agapic love, and (2) the fickleness of human fidelity. He responds to these concerns by arguing that Christianity's conception of neighbor-love is superior to, and more attractive than, both erotic love and friendship *on their own criteria of success*. Only *agape* - as a *praxis*, task, practical love, or what have you - is immune to the effects of deception, niggardly fortune and stepmotherly nature on our poor, frail affections.

In other words, *Works of Love* intends to seduce 'the poet' in us away from mere erotic love and friendship to agapic love using a sweet catharsis, which is ironic, since precisely what's at stake is loyalty to a conception of

'the highest' that is secure against deception, risk, and fickleness. Kierkegaard's method is that old Socratic standby of *dialectic*, the cure for which is a decision. In section 3 the dialectic will be reconstructed. It will be shown that Kierkegaard uses apparently equipollent arguments to support (F3) and (F4). In section 4 Kierkegaard's arguments will be evaluated.

### **3. Kierkegaard's Tragic and Comic Lovers**

Anyone who wishes to be a happy lover must deal with the following problem: people lie. Given that unfortunate fact, says Kierkegaard, there's no word or deed about which we can say without qualification, 'the person who says or does x unconditionally demonstrates her love by it,' since he could always be deceiving us.<sup>42</sup> This isn't the worst of it, however. We've all known the person who wonders (after accepting a marriage proposal, perhaps) whether she really

<sup>42</sup> *WOL*, p. 13: "There is no word in human language, no one single one, not the most sacred one, about which we are able to say: If a person uses this word, it is unconditionally demonstrated that there is love in that person. ... [For] it is true that one and the same word can convince us that love abides in the one who said it and does not in the other, who nevertheless said the same word." A few sentences later he argues the same point about behaviors: "There is no work, not one single one, not even the best, about which we unconditionally dare to say: The one who does this unconditionally demonstrates his love by it. [For] it depends on how the work is done."

loves her betrothed. In other words, our worries that our beliefs about love are justifiably extend to ourselves as well.<sup>43</sup> As Kierkegaard puts it,

In the same way the honest person surely admits that however often and many times he willingly and gladly gave to charity, he has never done it [perhaps] except in weakness ... [with the consequence that] the work of love really would not be a work of love in the highest sense.<sup>44</sup>

What we have here is a problem of a vaguely Kantian sort.<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, Kierkegaard says, what qualifies a human action as a work of love is the manner in which it is performed. On the other hand, our beliefs about love aren't incorrigible because we lack transparent access to

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Kant, *Groundwork*, AK 4: 407: "In fact we can never, even by the strictest examination, completely plumb the depths of the secret incentives of our actions."

<sup>44</sup> The complete quotation is: "In the same way the honest person surely admits that however often and many times he willingly and gladly gave to charity, he has never done it except in weakness, perhaps disturbed by an incidental impression, perhaps with capricious partiality, perhaps to make amends for himself, perhaps with averted face (but not in the scriptural sense), perhaps without the left hand's knowing about it, but thoughtlessly, perhaps thinking about his own cares instead of thinking about the cares of the poor, perhaps seeking alleviation by giving to charity instead of wanting to alleviate poverty—then the work of love really would not be a work of love in the highest sense" (*WOL*, p. 13).

<sup>45</sup> Kant recognizes this problem (Cf. *Groundwork*, AK 4: 407); however, Aristotle recognizes something like it too. Compare *EN* 8.2 and 8.4, where Aristotle argues that mutual recognition of reciprocal good-will and well-wishing is a necessary condition of friendship, with his concerns about feigning friends in *EN* 8.13 and 9.3.

the relevant motives, in ourselves and others, that would determine the issue once and for all. By bringing up this problem Kierkegaard is not asserting that we need demonstrative certainty in order to justify our love lives.<sup>46</sup> Heaven forbid! Rather, he's trying to get us to focus for a moment on the Cartesian - Lutheran? - anxieties this situation invariably occasions. If we're going to talk honestly about happy love and the conditions for its possibility, we have to talk about deception too.

So Kierkegaard begins the first chapter of *Works of Love* by examining the ways in which we can be deceived. He mentions two: "We can be deceived by believing what is untrue, but we are certainly also deceived by not believing what is true."<sup>47</sup> This allows Kierkegaard to distinguish between the lover who is *in love defrauded* (*begrages*) out of love - that is, the lover who is deceived by another - and a second lover who *defrauds herself* (*begrages for*) out of love, who deceives herself by refusing to believe she is loved. A closer examination of Kierkegaard's distinction between the two lovers reveals that he has used two

<sup>46</sup> Johannes Climacus, for example, the pseudonymous author of the *Concluding Scientific Postscript*, argues in several places that one can be satisfied with and even morally required to accept less than apodictic proofs in matters of love.

<sup>47</sup> *WOL*, p. 5.

standards of division. The first criterion concerns the *doxastic* difference between the lovers: one believes in love, the other does not. The second criterion concerns whether their beliefs are *veridical*, that is, whether reciprocity is present.

Let's assume that none of the lovers in question have formed their beliefs *ex nihilo*, but rather have formed their beliefs in virtue of some evidence I'll call the *promise of love*.<sup>48</sup> A proper division of Kierkegaard's lovers thus gives us four possible relationships (we'll borrow from Shakespeare to help keep them straight):

	Does not believe she is loved	Believes she is loved
Is Not Loved	Lover #1: Tamara	Lover #3: Cordelia
Is Loved	Lover #2: Ophelia	Lover #4: Rosalind

First, we can imagine a person who is not loved and who doesn't believe she is loved, like Tamara in *Titus*. This person's belief is obviously veridical. We can likewise imagine a person who is loved and who truly believes that she is loved (Rosalind, or Dante's Beatrice). Deception

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<sup>48</sup> Aristotle calls them "the marks of friendship" at *EN* 8.4, 1156b 30.

enters into the picture only when there is a gap between the doxastic state of the lover and the relevant fact about her beloved. We can imagine a person who is not loved but who believes that she is, like King Lear's daughter Cordelia; her belief is non-veridical, and assuming that she has had some reason for believing as she does - a false promise from her beloved - she is *deceived out of love*. We can likewise imagine a fourth person who is loved but who does not believe that she is loved (Hamlet's Ophelia, or Leontes of *Winter's Tale*); her belief is also non-veridical. Assuming again that she has some reason for believing as she does (some evidence contrary to the promise of love), we would call this person *self-deceived out of love*.

Who is the true lover? Our first instinct is to choose the fourth lover as our 'comic' lover, for only she meets the conditions of being loved and believing she's loved. If that's right, then none of the others are happy lovers. Tamara is not loved, and she does not believe she's loved. Perhaps there's a kind of virtue in that: she doesn't believe in anything that's false, so she's not deceived. On the other hand, she's really missing out on something good - love. Ophelia and Cordelia seem stupid and naïve,

respectively, but this is a bit quick. Both of them have a promise that they are interpreting as people normally and rightly do. Ophelia knows that she cannot apodictically infer love from its being promised, but takes her rules for the direction of her heart from her father's dualism about men – and so ceases to believe. The problem is that she's wrong, and so she cheats herself out of happy love. Cordelia knows that a promise is *some* evidence for being loved, and so she believes she's loved; the problem here is with the nature of the evidence and the villainy that abuses it. She believes falsely, and is so far unhappy. Read in different ways, our three lovers aren't exactly blameworthy, but they aren't happy lovers either. Even if they fulfill all of their epistemic duties, they can still be deceived: being a happy lover depends a lot on luck.

One problem with the above analysis is that although Lover #4 is intuitively our first pick for the prize of being the happiest lover, many people want to say that Lover #3 is happy too. Luckless though she is, she possesses the virtue of the lover if not the beloved. Kierkegaard will say that too, but not for the reasons of the many, who argue that insofar as she doesn't know that she's being deceived, she's happy. The assumption here is

that there's nothing more to happiness than our subjective experience of it. When students argue this point with me, my first response is a bald *ad hominem*: you wouldn't really tell your spouse that adultery is fine so long as you don't know about it, would you? Sometimes that works.<sup>49</sup>

Kierkegaard's response is more sophisticated, but it's also problematic. 'The poet' suggests that the third lover is a 'tragic' lover, since "the sight of someone unhappily deceived in love" moves us to tears.<sup>50</sup> Cashing this out in an Aristotelian manner, Cordelia is tragic because we pity her for being deceived and fear the circumstances of her deception (we all know what it is to be lied to). In contrast, Ophelia would appear "ridiculous and laughable if the ridiculousness of it were not an even stronger expression for horror, since it shows that [s]he is not worthy of tears."<sup>51</sup> Insofar as this unhappy lover is

<sup>49</sup> Not only does the student's objection fail to distinguish between happiness in the sense of being pleased and of being fulfilled - the former being a state of consciousness, and relatively trivial compared to the latter - but it assumes that one cannot be harmed without being hurt. *Hurt* requires consciousness of the hurt, while *harm* requires only requires the invasion of an interest, the worsening of a life. Thanks to Michael Wreen for pointing out the role consciousness plays in these distinctions.

<sup>50</sup> *WOL*, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *WOL*, p. 5. This is a strange line. If she's ridiculous, her situation, almost by definition, isn't horrible, but a

somehow at fault for her deception - she's both agent and subject of her deception - she's not *really* pitiable, even though her self-deception deprives her of a good. Perhaps the only reaction raised by the unhappy sight of her - that is, the sight of a 'bad' person suffering - is what Aristotle calls the 'human feeling': ouch.<sup>52</sup> Once our emotional reactions to the lovers are settled, Kierkegaard suggests, it's tough (though never impossible) to think Cordelia is happy and still prefer, in virtue of her objective situation, to be Ophelia.

Unfortunately, although we do indeed tend to pity the third lover more than the second, it's not clear that this is justified. Both lovers suffer because of an excusable error of judgment - excusable because the promise is ambiguous, erroneous because their beliefs don't match the facts of the matter - and it seems strange to think that the self-deception of lover two performs is villainous, in the way the deception performed on lover three is. Aristotle thinks decent people suffering due to excusable

harmless shame. If her situation is horrible, then it seems wrong to laugh at it. And either way, if this lover is fulfilling her epistemic duties, she's not completely at fault for her deception, so she's still worthy of tears insofar as she's pitiable. This sentence is one of the mysteries I hope to unravel in what follows.

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, section 13.

errors of judgment are paradigmatically tragic.

Kierkegaard's analysis of the lovers must force us to reconsider, under the Christian understanding of the qualification, what counts as an error in judging others, and what counts as tragic, supposing the Royal Command is true.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, while Aristotle observes that we tend to find the sight of a good person suffering - think of Iphigenia, of Desdemona, of Cordelia - odious rather than tragic.<sup>54</sup> Even if Kierkegaard is right about the lowly character of Ophelia, shouldn't she thus be *more tragic* than Cordelia? What is it that Kierkegaard thinks is so shameful about the second lover - who gives up on the command, helped by her father - and what justifies our honoring the third?

### **Counterpoint**

Anyone who wishes to be a happy lover must deal with the following evidential problem: not everyone lies. Given that fortunate fact, says Kierkegaard, there's no word or deed about which we can say without qualification: it's impossible that the person who says or does x demonstrates her love by it.

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, section 14, 1453b27 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, section 13, 1452b 30 - 36.

There is nothing, nothing at all, that cannot be done or said in such a way that it becomes upbuilding, but whatever it is, if it is upbuilding, then love is present. ... One person can do exactly the opposite of what another person does, but if each person does the opposite - in love - the opposite becomes upbuilding. There is no word in the language that is itself upbuilding, and there is no word in the language that cannot be said in an upbuilding way and become upbuilding if love is present.<sup>55</sup>

Any word can be a word of love: love is the philosopher's stone that turns lead into gold, an act of grace that, hidden under worldly accidents, turns the dross of language sacramental.

What we have here is a dilemma of an explicitly Thomistic sort. Veracity and deception are coextensive with a promise of love. It is equally possible - from the standpoint of logic - that your 'lover's' sweetest words are a deception and that your 'enemy's' vilest actions are done out of love. The intellect, according to both Thomas and Kierkegaard, can only set out the logical possibilities.<sup>56</sup> Belief (as opposed to simple cognition)

<sup>55</sup> *WOL*, p. 213. Here the ethicist in me objects: some deeds seem unambiguously to be impossible mediums of love. Having just read Aristotle, eating babies and committing adultery come to mind. Having never done either, perhaps I simply lack imagination, but even so, that's precisely my objection: *I cannot even imagine* how these acts could express *agape*.

<sup>56</sup> Kierkegaard holds that "Mistrustingly to believe nothing at all (which is entirely different from knowledge about the equilibrium of opposite possibilities) and lovingly to

consists in assent to the propositions the intellect but considers. If belief is principled rather than *ad hoc*, then we have two possible principles of presumption that could guide our assent:

1. Cartesian Doubt: If deception is possible, we should believe nothing that cannot be demonstrated apodictically.
2. Thomistic/Kierkegaardian Trust: If love is possible, we should interpret the wills of others charitably.<sup>57</sup>

As a *praxis*, assent is a confession: to choose (1) is to choose to mistrust the goodness of the other, while to choose (2) is to choose a love that "consists only of presupposing" goodwill in the neighbor and working for

*believe all things are not a cognition, nor a cognitive conclusion, but a choice that occurs when knowledge has placed the opposite possibilities in equilibrium; and in this choice, which, to be sure, is in the form of a judgment of others, the one judging becomes disclosed. That ... naivete [believes] all things is a cognition, that is, a fatuous cognition; lovingly to believe all things is a choice on the basis of love" (WOL, p. 234).*

<sup>57</sup> WOL, p. 228: "If, then, someone can demonstrate on the basis of the possibility of deception that one should not believe anything at all, I can demonstrate that one should believe everything - on the basis of the possibility of deception. If someone thinks that one should not believe even the best of persons, because it is still possible that he is a deceiver, then the reverse also holds true, that you can credit even the worst person with the good, because it is still possible that his badness is an appearance."

their good (like a Socratic midwife).<sup>58</sup> Thus Kierkegaard's assertion that *agape* is a task rather than an affection, a rule of belief, so to speak, that can in itself merit our praise or blame.

#### **(F3) and (F4): The Superiority of Agape**

By making itself a task, *agape* secures itself from all deception. For consider the conditions under which 'love' can be deceived. Both *eros* and *philia*, as Aristotle argued, require, as conditions of their satisfaction, proportional reciprocity of affection and care, and the model on which we are to think of this reciprocity – and possible deception – is, as Aristotle also says, the case of economic exchange.<sup>59</sup> As Kierkegaard draws the analogy,

A person pays out money in order to purchase some convenience; he has paid out the money, but he did not get the convenience – well, then he has been duped. He makes a love deal; he barters his love, but he did not receive reciprocal love in exchange – well, then he has been deceived.<sup>60</sup>

Consider: what makes deception possible in friendship and romantic love is the hidden will of the beloved, who may or may not reciprocate love. *Agape*, on the other hand, possesses all of the marks of friendship but does not

<sup>58</sup> *WOL*, p. 217.

<sup>59</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 8.13, 9. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *WOL*, p. 237.

demand reciprocity. The model on which we are to think of *agape* is the model of self-gift and loyalty: to persistently presuppose in the other the goodness you hope and work, for his sake, for him to have.<sup>61</sup> This entails that *agape* cannot be deceived, for to say that a giver of self could be deceived would be like "sticking money in a person's pocket and calling it stealing."<sup>62</sup> The only deception we can find in *agape* is self-deception: I can fail to love my neighbor while believing that I am. To use a Kierkegaardian turn of phrase, I can (a) fail to love my neighbor - like the Pharisee who asks Christ, 'Who is my neighbor?' and tries to ignore that one's neighbor is everyone - or (b) fail to love my neighbor by refusing to charitably believe him.

<sup>61</sup> *WOL*, p. 216 - 17: "The one who loves presupposes that love is in the other person's heart and by this very presupposition builds up love in him ... provided, of course, that in love he presupposes its presence in the ground." In the same vein, Kierkegaard later argues that love "hides a multitude of sins" either by choosing "silence ... as a mitigating explanation," or "by forgiveness" (p. 289).

<sup>62</sup> *WOL*, p. 241. Again: "... the love that demands reciprocal love ... can be deceived by remaining ignorant of the unworthiness of the object. ... [But] by not requiring the slightest reciprocal love, the one who truly loves has taken an unassailable position; he can no more be deceived out of his love than a man can be tricked out of the money he tenders as a gift and gives to someone" (*WOL*, 241 and 242)

Eschewing his usual example of the maiden in love, Kierkegaard uses two new examples of *agape* overcoming deception, despair, and betrayal to make his point: the father of the prodigal son, who by believing and hoping all things for his son is never deceived that "it is possible that even the most prodigal son could be saved" – and Christ's love for Peter at the moment of Peter's betrayal. This latter case might seem a counterexample to Kierkegaard's claim that *agape* can never be deceived, since it is precisely a case in which a friend has sworn an oath of loyalty and then, "in the moment of danger ... remained standing there as a spectator."<sup>63</sup> Let us see who is deceived: the one who swore the oath, or the one who, without demand for reciprocity, loved Peter unto the edge of doom?

And how did Christ look at Peter? ... it was as when a mother sees the child in danger through its own carelessness, and now, since she cannot manage to grasp the child, she watches it with her admittedly reproachful but also saving look. ... [He] who is called the Savior of the world always saw clearly where the danger was, saw that it was Peter who was in danger, saw that it was Peter who should and must be saved. The Savior of the world did not make the mistake of seeing his cause lost if Peter did not hasten to help him, but he saw Peter as lost if he did not hasten to save Peter.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *WOL*, p. 168.

<sup>64</sup> *WOL*, p. 170.

Back to our four lovers. Suppose that Cordelia loves Lear without demand for reciprocity. It follows that she is secure against being *deceived out of love* – what Lear says is as nothing to her. To the world (or at least to her sisters), this is foolishness: Cordelia goes through her life unloved by those around her, staking her happiness on a promise that might be a lie, ridiculed by everyone for her naïvite. She looks to the prudent world as if she's pitiable and tragic, yet she is in fact a martyr to love.<sup>65</sup> This explains our strange intuitions about her tragic state in the previous section: we love her more than lover two because of Cordelia's fidelity to her task even as we pity and fear her suffering in a world that makes fidelity a road to death.

The first two lovers are not so secure. They require words, and deeds, and promises, trusting none of them insofar as they believe (or come to believe) that promises are hollow. They're pitiable because they'll never be happy, and we fear their fault because they're responsible for it (as we are for our own). To be cleverly prudent in love, from the standpoint of *agape*, is to tragically self-deceive oneself out of the highest good, just as

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<sup>65</sup> *WOL*, p. 6.

Shakespeare's Lear deceives himself out of love by testing, and doubting, Cordelia.

Let's briefly rehash. Our original question was, what conditions must obtain for us to call a lover happy? This is a reasonable question because no one really wants to be *justified* here - philosophy won't find you a soulmate - but everyone does want to be *happy in love*. However, as we've seen, it's easy to conceive of a maiden in love who is both deceived about love and who, on the basis of available evidence, is *justified* in her non-veridical belief. Just as Solon and Aristotle would refrain from calling any man happy until he is dead, so too could we, given our God-like knowledge that her beloved is lying, refuse to call such a maiden happy. The problem is that happiness in love seems to unacceptably depend on an element of fortune beyond our control, namely, actually reciprocated love, and on a belief that is only inductively supported by available evidence. Hence the risk, and the tragedy and comedy, of love.

Kierkegaard's suggestion that we remove the demand for reciprocity likewise removes the unacceptable element of fortune from the conditions of happy love, focuses our attention on the value of the simple faith of the third

lover, and makes clear why we love her more than the other unhappy lovers. It gives fidelity an intrinsic value independent of the facts of the matter. This explains his attitude toward Ophelia: someone took a risk and promised her love, and she betrayed it through her infidelity, her failure to believe in charity. She's the villain.<sup>66</sup>

However, there's another conflict here. On the one hand, we would call uninformed belief naïve, and perhaps blameworthy as such; perhaps, as William Clifford says, we have a moral duty to believe nothing we have no justification for.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, we want to grant the third lover's fidelity some intrinsic value, since this explains our intuitive characterization of her as tragic rather than odious. Yet how can *believing all things* as such be valuable? Is the value of fidelity enough to legitimate its pursuit in the absence of convincing objective evidence of love in the beloved? We're caught between an *objective passion* for certainty and a *subjective*

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Gene Fendt's discussion of Ophelia in, *Is Hamlet a Religious Drama?: An Essay on a Question in Kierkegaard* (Marquette Studies in Philosophy, 21).

<sup>67</sup> William Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief." Originally published in *Contemporary Review*, 1877. Reprinted in *Lectures and Essays* (1879).

passion for being happy lovers, as Johannes Climacus says.<sup>68</sup>

We want the facts to conform to reason, and vice versa, but sometimes they don't; yet belief in love is a condition for the possibility of happy love.

Kierkegaard eventually admits that the highest good is to love and be loved (in that order) - if we're talking about love as *agape*.<sup>69</sup> We would not call the person who truly thinks she is loved a happy lover if she herself (a) did not love her beloved or (b) was not believed to love her beloved by her beloved. Yet the task of the happy lover, as Kierkegaard puts it, is to love while believing that one is loved. Only this activity meets, on the side of the lover, the conditions of happy love. On the other hand, such a task is epistemically blind, since a person cannot be said to know whether she is loved or whether her beloved believes that he is loved. The independently necessary and jointly sufficient reasons for happy love seem to be three, whether we're talking about *eros* and *philia* or *agape*:

<sup>68</sup> Climacus discusses this distinction in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (trans. Howard and Edna Hong [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992]) "The historian seeks to reach the greatest possible certainty, and the historian is not in any contradiction, because he is not in passion; at most he has the research scholar's objective passion, but he is not in subjective passion" (p. 575).

<sup>69</sup> *WOL*, p. 244.

		Eros and Philia	Agape
1. Epistemic Condition	Reciprocal and veridical belief about the other's will	Presumption of Value	
2. Ontological Condition	A response to some excellence	Ability <sup>70</sup>	
3. Volitional Condition	Care and fidelity	Fidelity (to task) and care.	

The conditions of happy (fulfilled) *eros* and *philia* are defeasible because their justification depends on particular, contingent, changeable, and ambiguous characteristics of the other. The conditions of *agape* are not defeasible in this way, but only by mistrust/infidelity: failure at one's task of being-a-lover.

We are now in position to ask the important question: Is it reasonable to believe in love on the basis of a promise?<sup>71</sup> Suppose you wish to be a happy lover. Whether

<sup>70</sup> I assume any candidates for love must be lovable and have an intellect and will capable of supporting charitable presumption and virtuous fidelity.

<sup>71</sup> Or (equivalently?) to believe in a God of Love on the basis of a promise? I read Kierkegaard as cashing out God's promise in terms of testimony and other historical evidence, as we find him doing in the *Concluding*

you are in fact happy causally depends upon the actual existence of a love whose existential status you cannot know. However, the existence or non-existence of love in the beloved does not change your task as a lover, for insofar as you are a lover you have a requirement: to love while believing you are loved. The problem with this is that being-a-lover seems to require that you renounce your objective passion for epistemic certainty as a guarantee of your happiness. Indeed, as we said in regard to Lear, a desire for guarantees is a temptation rather than a safeguard of love. On the other hand, renouncing your subjective passion for being happily in love entails that you are not a lover, which guarantees only that you will never be happily in love, and not that you could not have been happy.

On what grounds does one decide between being-a-lover and not being-a-lover? Are some grounds for so choosing morally (or philosophically?) condemnable? William Clifford would say that the choice must be grounded in the project of reason, which ought never be overridden by any other project. For Kierkegaard, the pursuit of the project

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*Unscientific Postscript*, and of raising the question of the value of fidelity to the lover's task in *Fear and Trembling*.

of reason as overriding all other projects is itself a choice - and why assume it's the nobler one?<sup>72</sup> Relative to what end? A second-critique Kantian would probably say that these questions are strange, since one condition for the possibility of reason itself is the coherence of its practical and speculative projects.<sup>73</sup>

Love hopes all things.

#### **4. Evaluating Kierkegaard**

There are three legitimate objections to Kierkegaard's attack on *philia*.

##### **Problem 1**

Kierkegaard's primary criticisms of *eros* and *philia* require that he prove two things.

1. That these forms of love are necessarily unstable insofar as they are grounded on affections that are themselves inherently fickle; i.e., the idea of steadfast *eros* and *philia* is incoherent.

<sup>72</sup> WOL, p. 231: "There is no decision in knowledge ... the mistrustful person and the loving person have knowledge in common, and neither is the mistrustful person mistrustful through this knowledge nor is the loving one who loves through this knowledge."

<sup>73</sup> This is the problem of the 'antinomy of practical reason' in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, AK 5: 113 - 114.

2. That *agape* is necessarily steadfast - perhaps 'loyal' is a better word - insofar as it grounded on a decision that is inherently stable.

Only if both of these assumptions are true will Kierkegaard have shown that *agape* is superior to *eros* and *philia*.

However, both assumptions seem to me to be false.

Consider the first: there is nothing at all *incoherent* in the idea of an enduring affection for some good - contingent though that affection may be - yet that is precisely what proving (1) requires. Suppose we assume what is undoubtably the case, that (a) nothing but a perfect good adequately known to be good can *command* our affection, so that as long as we live we retain the ability to shift our affection from one imperfectly good thing to another, and that (b) these imperfectly good things are *contingently* good insofar as they can gain or lose their valuable properties. Nevertheless, we can imagine (a) an imperfectly good being that is the object of someone's persistent fidelity, and (b) a contingently good thing that, despite its ability to lose some valuable feature, simply doesn't: the pre-lapsarian love of Adam in Eve in a possible world in which they never fall. Or, to take a more mundane yet perfectly good example, consider the

everlasting gobstopper invented by Charlie of chocolate factory fame: it's both everlasting and constantly attention-grabbing.<sup>74</sup> While not everything that's coherent is possible, coherency is at least a necessary condition of being possible. The point is that that we can admit that it's possible for our affections to shift and for beings to lose their value while denying any necessity of such changes, which is what Kierkegaard requires in order to cinch his case.

Neither does it matter if common sense despises some fast hand-waving here and objects that it remains the case that our affections *do* shift and things *do* gain and lose value over time. Aristotle himself admitted that the lower forms of friendship are inherently unstable and self-serving for those very reasons. However, he also argued that virtue friendship achieves stability precisely in loving the humanity of the other, and in a shared vision of the good, both of which, by nature or achievement, are "lasting things."<sup>75</sup> There's only one reason to think that the decision to live an *agapic* life contained in the hypothetical statement, "If you want to be a happy lover ..."

<sup>74</sup> Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (New York: Puffin, 1964).

<sup>75</sup> Aristotle, *EN* 8.3.

is any less settled or dependent on an affection than a character state that's by definition a settled disposition, a *hexis*, as Kierkegaard requires in (2). That reason is one Augustine mentions in the first paragraph of the *Confessions*: if our nature is such that the desire to love and be loved is *assertoric* for human beings, if our "heart is restless until it rests in you," in the arms of an Eternal Beloved, then there's no one who's human who doesn't satisfy the antecedent.<sup>76</sup> But of course there are people - Augustine was one of them - who deceive themselves into thinking that they have no need for Love, just as Aristotle can point to people who deceive themselves into thinking that virtue isn't a necessary condition of *eudaimonia*. It's precisely because of that freedom that we praise saints and moral heroes, and it's because the saint and the hero decide to be good that we praise them, and their love is stable - and (2) fails to be true.

### **Problem 2**

My second criticism of Kierkegaard concerns the fact that he secures the intrinsic value of loyalty (to the task of *agape*) only by asserting that loyalty has value

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. John Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960)

independently of the value of the object of loyalty. This seems to be fundamentally wrong.

The easiest way to see this is to use an analogy from Descartes. In the second *Meditation*, Descartes attempts to prove that the proposition, that 'Beliefs founded on sense perception are reliable,' is false. His second argument, the famous 'Argument from Dreaming,' tries to show this on the grounds that there is no internal criterion by which we can distinguish the 'false' perceptions we have in dreams from the 'true' perceptions we have while awake.<sup>77</sup> If we put all of our dreaming perceptions in one bucket and all of the waking perceptions in a second bucket, shook them up together in a third bucket, and then took them one by one for examination, we'd be unable to tell them apart. The difference between the two kinds of perceptions lies in their source or cause rather than in their nature qua perceptions. Thus Descartes can show that even if it's the case that *some* perceptions are reliable, we have no principled and independent way to tell *which* perceptions are reliable.

Regardless of the soundness of the 'Argument from Dreaming' itself, the following does seem to be true: what

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<sup>77</sup> This argument occurs in *Meditation 1*, AT VII: 19 - 20.

makes a perception part of a dream are *external conditions* rather than *internal conditions*. If I'm asleep and having an image of *x*, then I'm dreaming. If I'm awake and having an image of *x*, then I'm not dreaming, whatever else I'm doing (I could still be hallucinating or daydreaming or whatever).<sup>78</sup> Thus, from *I have an image of x*, neither *I'm awake* nor *I'm dreaming* follows – that has to be determined independently of the perception in question.

I think the value of loyalty similarly depends on conditions external to the virtue of loyalty itself. Kierkegaard argues as if the distinction between the Cartesian rule of doubt/mistrust and the Kierkegaardian/Thomistic rule of presumption is an exclusive one – although it's not<sup>79</sup> – and that we should praise the person who uses the latter but not the former. As a result, Kierkegaard argues, the value of fidelity to the task of *agape* consists in its “believing all things” and thereby securing itself against external deception. What Kierkegaard fails to see is that construing the value of fidelity this way allows for martyrs to love, but it also allows for suicide bombers. In an unqualified sense,

<sup>78</sup> I'm indebted to James Mahon for this formulation of Descartes' argument.

<sup>79</sup> As Aquinas argued; see chapter four.

both forms of loyalty are praiseworthy as instances of loyalty. Yet it doesn't follow from this that all loyalties are unqualifiedly goods.

Whether a loyalty is an unqualified good depends on external circumstances that include the object of loyalty itself. As Descartes might say if faced with the same problem, from the fact that *x is loyal*, neither *x's loyalty is praiseworthy* nor *x's loyalty is blameworthy* follows – that has to be determined independently of the concept of loyalty itself. Insofar as we must distinguish between praiseworthy loyalty and blameworthy fanaticism, and Kierkegaard doesn't or can't, his account of loyalty – and his criticism of *eros* and *philia* on those grounds – is seriously defective.

### **Problem 3**

Finally, Kierkegaard seems to think that his account of *agape* doesn't do violence to special relations. He writes that,

Your wife must first and foremost be to you your neighbor; that she is your wife is then a more precise specification of your particular relationship to each other.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *WOL*, p. 141.

Against the traditional interpretation of Kierkegaard – which takes *Works of Love* as prescribing that there be no more marriages – I take Kierkegaard to be arguing that *philia* – which in marriage takes up and transforms pure *eros* – generates obligations in addition to the general obligations which we have to every human being (our ‘neighbor’). To practice *agape* is to “seize [passionate preference], purify it, sanctify it, and in this way make everything new while everything is still old”<sup>81</sup> rather than trump or replace it. At the risk of putting words in his mouth, Kierkegaard’s theory of special relations seems to hold that our duties of special obligation cannot conflict with our duties of general obligation; both types of obligation can *in principle* be simultaneously satisfied.

This seems wrong on two counts. First, only purely negative obligations cannot *in principle* conflict. Insofar as friendship and loyalty involve positive obligations of care, they can come into conflict with our general obligations, say, of justice. In fact, it is exactly conflicts of this sort between care and respect, loyalty and justice that have generated so much interest in recent decades in the form of ethical dilemmas that are now

<sup>81</sup> *WOL*, p. 145.

staples in introductory ethics courses. Second, it's far from clear - judging from the contemporary literature - that universalistic ethical theories either need, or if we do think they need, can account for special relations and obligations. Even St. Paul had his doubts, though he admitted that it was better to marry than to burn.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite the fact that, in the end, we must reject Kierkegaard's arguments as unsound, this isn't to say that these arguments are without value. For the focus of his arguments - on the ethical status of friendship as a moral (or amoral) phenomenon, on the contingency and fickleness of its ground, and on the effect that possible deception and consequent risk have on the limits of loyalty - tend to bring to focus and summarize historically grounded philosophical concerns surrounding friendship and loyalty. They also set the stage for contemporary scholarship that takes up these issues with a vengeance.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> To take one example: Neera Kapur Badhwar makes these issues the focus of her introduction to a recent book of contemporary philosophy of friendship, *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, Neera Kapur Badhwar ed. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993): 1 - 36.

## CHAPTER 6. LOYALTY, CARE, AND JUSTICE

*You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he (the wicked man) shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked man, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.*

--Ezekiel, 33: 7 - 9

### 1. Two Objections

It might be thought that reasons involving friendship and loyalty cannot sufficiently ground the rightness or wrongness of an action because of (a) their general irrelevance to such judgments or (b) their being expected or supererogatory, but not obligatory. In what follows I'll argue that (b) commits a category mistake, and (a) is false: reasons involving friendship and loyalty constitute *prima facie* grounds for the rightness or wrongness of some actions.

#### (a) The Genuine Reasons Objection

Not so long ago, H.L.A. Hart argued that your mobster uncle can have a right that you keep your promise to him that you'll whack the shopkeeper down the street even if whacking the shopkeeper is morally wrong. Obligations are owed to assignable persons who have correlative rights, he

argued, and are justified by the relationship between two persons rather than by the nature of the action in question. Rights are fundamentally powers to create, waive, or enforce obligations in others, and thus a person can have a right that you do wrong. Claim-rights (*ius*) are fundamentally claims of enforceability, and thus distinct from claims about the *rightness* or *wrongness* (*iustia*) of an action.<sup>1</sup>

This cannot be fully correct. Surely claims of justice limit what someone can have a genuine claim-right to, for someone's assertion of her moral rights ultimately function as grounds for a judgment about the *rightness* or *wrongness* of an action. Claim-rights are ultimately claims about justice, or what someone deserves.

In fact, there are many sorts of reasons for thinking that an action is wrong. If Carl is about to punch Lewis in the face, you might mention the likely consequence that Carl will be sent to jail, or that it's not nice to punch people, or that were he in Lewis's shoes, Carl wouldn't want to be punched. Given such variety among kinds of practical reasons and the fact that such reasons can

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<sup>1</sup> H.L.A. Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?" *Philosophical Review* (64) 1955: 175-82.

compete with each other, W.D. Ross's position that any practical reason has *prima facie* force is at least methodologically reasonable. If claim-rights are but one reason among others for thinking that an action is wrong, then it's possible that they can sometimes be overridden by competing considerations.

Consider the fact that Lewis is a friend of Carl. For many - including Ross - special relations, including friendship and loyalty, constitute excellent reasons to think that Carl's punching Lewis in the nose is wrong independently of other reasons of the sort just mentioned.<sup>2</sup> That is, *X*'s invocation of *Y*'s friendship, an invocation that may also point out *X*'s obligations of loyalty on the basis of that friendship, give *X* reasons to  $\varphi$ , and to believe that  $\varphi$  is right or wrong. These reasons may operate independently of or even in opposition to reasons having to do with  $\varphi$ 's being virtuous, good, or within *Y*'s rights.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1930).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, David McNaughton and J. Piers Rawling, "Deontology," in *Principles of Health Care Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Ashcroft, Dawson, Draper and McMillian, eds. (West Sussex, EN: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2007): p. 69.

Not everyone thinks that is true. Some argue that practical reasons involving friendship and loyalty constitute a 'moral danger' to responsible, disinterested ethical decision-making. There are two forms this worry takes. The weaker one is that loyalty will be over-valued among competing practical reasons. The second, stronger concern is that this allows fundamentally irrational considerations, of which friendship and loyalty are paradigm cases, to play a function in moral reasoning: given their nature, friendship and loyalty shouldn't be valued at all, or aren't reasons for morally right action at all.<sup>4</sup> Just as many informal fallacies aren't logically persuasive, even if they're persuasive for other reasons, reasons involving claims of friendship and loyalty simply aren't properly moral reasons to do anything, even if

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Keller articulates both concerns in *The Limits of Loyalty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), without clearly discriminating them. Voicing the strong concern, he argues that "your loyalty to X is expressed as loyalty in belief if being loyal to X inclines you to hold or resist certain beliefs, independently of the evidence" (p. 6), which is distinct from the weaker concern that a loyal person is "someone who is undiscriminating, and whose emotional attachments to particular entities play too much of a role in determining how she will live her life" (p. 157).

they're *psychologically* powerful reasons-for-action, like fear, love and jealousy.<sup>5</sup>

### **(b) Non-Obligatory Reasons**

Traditionally it is said that there are three sorts of judgments we can make about an action. We can determine that an action is (a) morally required, (b) morally neutral, or (c) morally forbidden. Actions of the first sort are those that it is right to do and wrong not to do; in general, we talk here about a person having an *obligation* to  $\varphi$  (where  $\varphi$  denotes any action for which someone can be held responsible). Actions of the second sort are not morally required but not wrong not to do. Here we talk about a person having moral *permission* to  $\varphi$ . Actions in the final category are those it is not right to do, and which it is definitely wrong to do, and these are the actions we have an obligation not to do, i.e., that are morally *prohibited*.

We gain many of our obligations by making contracts or something like them; some philosophers think these are the

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Cocking and Kennet, "Friendship and Moral Danger," *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2000): 278-96. Also see R.E. Ewin, "Loyalties, and Why Loyalty Should Be Ignored." *Criminal Justice Ethics* 12 (1) 1993: 36-42.

only ways we gain obligations.<sup>6</sup> Our obligations can also be of wide or narrow scope. Some obligations are those we have to everyone, and are thus called 'general' obligations, while others we have only in relation to specific persons and are thus called 'special' obligations. Combining these categories regarding the origin and scope of our obligations generates various classes of morally required actions:

1. *Contracted, Specific Obligations:* Obligations we possess in virtue of an explicit or implicit agreement with a specific person, such as the

<sup>6</sup> Glaucon (in Plato's *Republic*, 358e – 359b) is the most famous example of this, though Jan Narveson might be the most recent. (Narveson has asserted this position in many places. For a recent example, see his "Is There a Duty to Die"? in *Is There a Duty to Die*, Humber and Almeder eds. (New Jersey: Humana Press, 2000) pp. 23 – 40.) Ultimately one must decide whether a person can have obligations he doesn't explicitly contract for by the nature of things and the circumstances in which he finds himself (like being human and finding oneself in the situation of being able to save a child drowning in a shallow pond), or whether these obligations are consequences of what Locke called a 'tacit agreement' to a Social Contract (and thus that all obligations are at least quasi-contractual). Ultimately I don't think Contractualism has the power to ground morality. Among other problems, the notion of 'tacit' agreement makes no sense unless there is some action by which one agrees to cooperative behavior that is explicitly recognized as tacit agreement – e.g., as abstention from a binding vote implies acceptance of the outcome of the vote – in which case the action is not tacit.

obligation to keep one's promise to Jones, or to meet him for lunch as always next week.

2. *Non-Contracted, Specific Obligations:* Obligations we possess in virtue of our relationship (voluntary or involuntary) with specific other persons - usually our kin or friends - such as the obligation to support one's children, or the duty to take care of your parents when they're elderly.<sup>7</sup>

3. *Non-Contracted, General Obligations:* Obligations we possess in virtue of our humanity, such as the obligation not to unjustifiably harm other persons, to tell the truth, not to wantonly destroy the environment, etc.<sup>8</sup>

4. *Contracted, General Obligations:* Obligations we possess in virtue of an explicit agreement with a

<sup>7</sup> Michael Sandel calls these "obligations of solidarity," and argues that loyalty falls into this class of obligations, in *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009): p. 225 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the obligation to tell the truth, Ross and others hold that this obligation is grounded on our own past behaviors, and not in general. The Natural Law tradition and I think this is backwards, i.e., that the obligatoriness of truth-telling is rooted in the nature, objects and value of the human intellect antecedent to any particular behaviors of ours. See, for example, Alfonso Gomez-Lobo, *Morality and the Human Goods: An Introduction to Natural Law Ethics* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown UP, 2002): p. 20 - 21.

large or indefinite number of people. These obligations are instantiated in positive law, and include (among others) the obligation to pay taxes and not to engage in nuclear war.

There are three sub-categories of action within the class of morally neutral actions, including:

5. *Non-Agentic Actions*: Behaviors persons do through no explicit exercise of their agency (e.g., without deliberation or choice), such as scratching one's beard or shouting when one stubs one's toe.<sup>9</sup>

6. *Reasonable Expectation*: Permissible actions that other persons have some justification to expect us to perform or refrain from performing, but which we have no obligation to perform and to which they have no correlative right to demand that we perform. Such actions might include driving one's friend to work and giving backrubs to lovers.

7. *Supererogatory*: Permissible actions that are not reasonably expected by others, and to which others

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<sup>9</sup> This category was identified by Aquinas, who distinguished *actions of men* from *actions men do* on these grounds, and who limited moral responsibility to the former. See *Treatise on Happiness*, Q1. a. 1 c.

have no right, but which it is praiseworthy or heroic to perform, such as a civilian jumping into a raging river in order to save a stranger's drowning child.

Classes (2) and (6) are going to be most important for the purpose of discussing the nature of loyalty, with (6) being the most controversial. One important objection is that (6) isn't a class of permissible actions, but of at least weakly obligatory ones, and thus reducible to categories (2) or (3).

Consider (2) again. It is reasonable to expect that your friend will defend your interests when you're not around - say, at the office coffee cooler. In fact, it would also be wrong of her not to do so. Against Hart - who might deny the existence of an obligation with no correlative right - this is the case even if you have no right to demand that she defend your reputation against office slander, and the action is so far unenforceable. Yet there is also a class of actions we reasonably expect others to perform, and which we lack the right to enforce, and which are *not* obligatory, i.e., the actions (6) is intended to cover. Not everything we are obliged to do has a correlative right, and while we can reasonably expect

(insofar as these are *prima facie reasons* for action) that others will keep their obligations and respect our rights, we reasonably expect things of others which we neither have a right that others perform nor which others are obligated to perform. If you need a dictionary to solve a particularly nasty crossword puzzle clue, you can reasonably expect that your brother will allow you to borrow his dictionary to do so, even though he has no obligation to let you borrow the dictionary. The book is his, after all.

One way to capture this difference between (2) and (6) is to say that (6) merely involves virtue, while (2) involves justice (what someone deserves) as well. Indeed, the performance of what is reasonably expected of an adult person is quite nicely captured by the phrase 'what a virtuous or mature person would do.' For example, we expect people to act politely in public, to dress modestly, and to leave a bit of food for us at the buffet; the sort of person who does these things is someone who is refined, modest, and moderate. We might even criticize people who violate these expectations, making judgments about their character, e.g., that so-and-so is wearing a vulgar dress, or is crass or gluttonous. The violation of these

expectations can be offensive to our sensibilities, and may set a vicious example to impressionable youths, but usually such violations stop short of definite and concrete harm to others. J.S. Mill argued that this is an important reason for allowing such actions to be legally and (he held, much more controversially) morally permissible, however crass they may be. Some vicious actions might nevertheless be private, and so escape claims of both *ius* and *iustia*.<sup>10</sup>

Kant disagrees with Mill about this last point by arguing that some self-regarding actions can involve wrongdoing towards oneself.<sup>11</sup> Our obligations toward ourselves cover beneficence in addition to *iustia*; we have imperfect duties to perfect ourselves, duties Kant calls *duties of virtue* (rather than *duties of right*) on grounds of the former's unenforceability.<sup>12</sup> One condition for this is that the Kantian notion of the 'self' is a normative, teleological concept – a regulative ideal of practical reason that is itself practical, or action-guiding. This is similar to the concept of self I attributed to Aristotle in chapter two. However, whereas Aristotle grounds the value of this

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mill's *On Liberty*, especially chapters 2 and 4 where he discusses his 'harm principle' for distinguishing private (permissible) and public (impermissible) behaviors.

<sup>11</sup> Kant argues for this in his treatment of suicide in the *Groundwork*, AK 4: 422, 430.

<sup>12</sup> Kant, *MM*, AK 6: 417 – 418.

self in the analytic relation between actuality and goodness, Kant roots it in the analytic relation between autonomy and value.<sup>13</sup> Put in these terms, the existence of category (6) depends on whether we have a general obligation to be virtuous – to act on reasons of a certain sort – over and above general obligations to do the sorts of actions that virtuous persons do,<sup>14</sup> and that problem hinges on the ground of moral value in the world. Henceforth we will set such problems aside, and provisionally accept that category (6) exists for the sake of argument.

There is much disagreement as to whether loyalty falls into class (1), contracted special obligations, class (2), non-contracted special obligations, or class (6), reasonable expectation, as defined above.<sup>15</sup> In general, the debate focuses on how our loyalties are generated, whether they have the force of obligations, and whether loyalty is

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle argues that excellence implies the full actuality of a natural kind (*EN* 10.7), whereas Kant argues that all value is dependent on the existence of autonomous rational agents: everything other than the *wille* has conditional worth (*GW*, AK 4: 428, 434 – 37).

<sup>14</sup> This is a peculiarly Kantian problem, I think, which cannot even arise in Aristotelian ethics.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kleinig, John, "Loyalty", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL= <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/loyalty/>>, for an overview of the debate.

an unenforceable virtue or a behavior someone can demand as their due. One difficulty in deciding this issue is that many acts we would call 'loyal' fall into each of these classes. Consider class (1): our political representatives have an obligation - and we have a right to demand - that they reliably act in our interests in virtue of an oath of office made to the public they serve. On the other hand, many people consider a citizen's saluting his country's flag, and a customer's repeat business, as expressions of loyalty, but don't consider such actions *obligatory* except in very peculiar circumstances. Such acts of loyalty thus fall into class (6). Yet it is also the case that we wrong a friend by failing to reliably act in his interests analogous to the way in which a politician can wrong his constituency by failing to reliably act in their interests. This is so even when we have not promised our friends that we'll do so. Alcibiades wronged Socrates in addition to Athens when he betrayed his city to the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War, for instance, and among the many reasons his action was wrong is the reason that it betrayed his obligations of friendship to his mentor, Socrates.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Plato has Alcibiades insinuate as much in the *Symposium*, and many interpreters take Plato to be arguing that

### (c) Some Theses

All morally interesting claims of loyalty, I'll argue below, fall into class (2). The paradigm cases of these loyalties exist between kith, kin and friends. Thus do we rightly accuse negligent parents, for example, of moral wrongdoing towards their children. I'll also argue that the difference between (2) and (6) that makes (2) but not (6) morally interesting consists partly in a confusion of rights with interests. Special relations can generate right-like obligations that strangers lack even when both need assistance. This distinction is not always important - a child drowning in a shallow pond generates an obligation in you, a passerby, to help him out of the predicament even if the child is a stranger to you and lacks a right to your beneficence. Minimally decent Samaritanism, to borrow a phrase from J.J. Thomson, requires as much.<sup>17</sup> However, the distinction does make a difference when there are two children drowning in a pond, one of whom is your son. Failure to save him first, to prioritize his interests over those of the other child,

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Socrates was betrayed by, rather than in collusion with Alcibiades at *Republic* VII, 490c ff.

<sup>17</sup> Though she herself famously denies this of a case involving Henry Fonda in J.J. Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1971): 47 - 66.

would constitute an wrong towards your son insofar as it violated care from you that is due to him. Loyalty, I'll argue, primarily involves the obligation to reliably assist those to whom we stand in special relations to satisfy their weighty interests, i.e., over time.

Finally, I'll argue that if loyalty is a ground for wrongness - if loyalty is a species of justice having to do with reliable provision of care - then 'wrongful loyalty' will be a contradiction in terms. There will be no cases in which A is loyal to B by φ-ing when φ-ing is an act that it is wrong to do. R.M. Hare's infamous Fanatical Nazi, who never questioned the morality of actions commanded by Hitler's Germany, is often cited as an example of someone who acts loyally but wrongly.<sup>18</sup> However, this is a misuse of the term 'loyalty.' As Kierkegaard pointed out, no expression of an attitude or character trait is by itself sufficient for having that attitude or character trait. A Fanatical Nazi can do and say everything that a truly loyal person would do without being, for that reason, truly loyal. His actions can share a symptomology with loyal actions while differing in their aetiology. The two

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1963). Reprinted in 1990. R.E. Ewin denies that loyalty can be a virtue on just these grounds in "Loyalty and Virtues," *Philosophical Quarterly* 42 (169): 403-19.

actions are for that reason *different kinds* of actions, in the same way that homonyms share sounds but not meanings – think if ‘be’ and ‘bee’ – and are therefore different words.

More confusing is the fact that a truly loyal person can sometimes exercise her loyalty by failing to provide what most of us would regard as ‘loyal’ assistance. Loyalty can sometimes share a symptomology with betrayal. We’ll end with a partial explanation of this phenomena.

## **2. Loyalty**

Let’s begin by assuming, quite uncontroversially, that loyalty requires us to persevere in care, where by care we mean a disposition to protect or promote the interests of particular others.<sup>19</sup> The kind of care loyalty is concerned with cannot be simply understood as what Kant called the ‘practical love’ that I have for everyone in virtue of some non-accidental, universal property all persons enjoy (like rationality, or being a child of God).<sup>20</sup> It is impossible for everyone to be the equal recipient of my care because

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, John Kleinig, “Loyalty”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, AK 4: 399.

my resources are limited and people's interests conflict. Even more importantly, practical love (like justice) is founded on a relation that I lack the ability to sever; I am *necessarily* related to others *qua* persons or *qua* children of God in virtue of the *kind* of thing they are. As a consequence, such relations are necessarily *universal*: they apply to *all* members of a kind *qua* members of that kind. For example, I have an obligation not to unjustifiably kill any person; this obligation is not one I can rid myself of (as one discharges a promise, say), nor one that applies only to bald people, or whomever. Given the nature of practical love, then, it simply makes no sense to talk about getting rid of the obligation insofar as I cannot desist from it and because it is generated by a relation in which I stand to every other moral agent *qua* moral agent. It's intuitively clear that loyalty, whatever else it is, is not going to involve a strictly necessary relation, or one that extends to everyone: some loyalties can be gained and lost, and loyalty justifiably prioritizes some interests over others.

Nevertheless, loyalty does involve relations of justice. While it's not the case that every act of injustice involves disloyalty - the stranger who demands your wallet

at gunpoint does something unjust, but isn't disloyal to you - a disloyal action between friends does involve injustice. A friend deserves the loyalty of his friend insofar as such relations are in part defined as relations of reciprocal benevolence and beneficence. If Smith's friend Jones wins the lottery, and Smith is about to lose his house due to financial insolvency, Jones does something wrong by failing to help Smith out when he's able to.

Loyalty and care are related in similar ways. Failures of care do not always constitute failures of loyalty, even those when such failures are unjust. I once saw a television show in which a doctor negligently gave his patient the wrong medication because he was preoccupied with a particularly buxom and flirtatious nurse. The doctor failed to care for his patient as he should have, and did so unjustly (he was contracted by the patient to provide care), but he wasn't disloyal to the patient. In fact, the doctor's loyalty to his patient was never really at stake. On the other hand, it's possible to care for a person without being loyal to her. Don Giovanni, Mozart's famously serial lover, cared for 1,001 women in Spain, but it would be ridiculous to talk of Giovanni's loyalties. Nevertheless, a person who is loyal to another is disposed

to perform caring acts for her; he intends and attempts to look out for her interests. Further, such attempts must be regularly forthcoming. Putatively loyal persons who regularly fail to display care lose their right to be called loyal. A spy, for example, who consistently fails to display care for the side he's spying for will gradually lose his credibility as a spy and will eventually be identified as a double-agent or no agent (of loyalty) at all.

These points show that loyalty, understood as involving the intention to reliably provide positive care for a special relation, is a species of both justice and care, where 'care' means both helpful and non-harmful action. Loyalty entails care as man entails animal, and loyalty involves behavior that a person deserves, and who would be treated unjustly if the behavior weren't forthcoming. However, villains and cads can do the occasional just or beneficent act without being for that reason loyal - acts of loyalty require motives of loyalty as their causes. Loyalty is a kind of *reason* for kinds of just and caring actions. Finally, an important mark of loyalty is that someone who is loyal to another is someone who *consistently* attempts to care for the other's interests, successfully or

otherwise, in virtue of the special relationship between them. This is so, as noted above, because consistent failure to display care counts as evidence against the presence of loyal motives in one's friend.

### **3. Strong Relations and Deep Interests**

In this section I will offer an analysis of the ways in which special relations can generate right-like obligations of loyalty that distinguish such obligations from our general obligations to assist others and their expectations that we do so. This analysis will thus distinguish between categories (2) and (6) and place loyalty firmly in (2).

First, let's remember Socrates' initial objection to Polemarchus and his father in Plato's *Republic*: no friend would return a weapon to a friend if doing so would bring the friend harm.<sup>21</sup> The true friend does what is truly good, i.e., what is in the interests of his friend, and does not do what merely appears good to his friend but is in fact bad for him. Loyalty is directed at a friend's good, and not at what he merely desires.

One way of determining where a person's true interests lie uses the relative concepts of *good* and *harm*. Without

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<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Republic* 331a and 331e.

pretending to provide a deep analysis of either term, something is *prima facie* good for us - in our interests - if it meets the following conditions. The first is derived from Aristotle: *x* is in *P*'s interest if *x* is either necessary or sufficient for *P*'s flourishing as a member of her kind.<sup>22</sup> Second, an important clue to which goods are necessary to human flourishing is that they involve things, like food, which we desire involuntarily, i.e., which one cannot in normal circumstances *not* desire. Involuntary desires generate *non-volitional* needs, as opposed to *free volitional* needs, to borrow a distinction from Henry Frankfurt, those that have goals we can, in normal circumstances, fail to, cease to, or desire not to, desire.<sup>23</sup> Failure to achieve the necessary means to human flourishing thus brings about unavoidable harm, the

<sup>22</sup> This way of putting things leaves it an open question whether there are moral goods that are sufficient but not necessary for our flourishing, such as education, meaningful work, religion, aesthetic value, friendship and play. I have argued throughout that such goods are necessary as well as sufficient for human flourishing, in keeping with the Grisez school of Natural Law. The best-known proponent of this position is John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980).

<sup>23</sup> Henry Frankfurt, "Necessity and Desire," in *Necessary Goods: Our Responsibilities to Meet Others' Needs*, ed. Gillian Brock (Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998): 19 - 32. Originally published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 45 (Sept. 1984): 1 - 13.

invasion of a non-volitional interest, such as occurs in starvation.

We can go beyond this analysis by noticing that not all morally interesting interests are equal. Some involve persistent needs - things we need all the time, or so often that their provision is a matter of constant concern, like food, water and air - while some are variable needs, such as medicine, or a rope if you've fallen down a well, which are morally interesting at the time they are needed but the need for which arises and fades over time or occurs more or less by chance. We always need to eat, drink, and breathe; we are not always sick or at the bottom of a well.

Actions in classes (2) and (6) both involve provision of positive care, and such provision becomes morally weighty when the interests of the person being cared for become increasingly serious in the ways described above. (This similarity, we'll see below, is cause of the temptation to place loyalty in both classes.) We reasonably expect our friends to concern themselves with our interests. Many friends will treat the interests of their friend as their own; minimally, at least, we expect friends to help friends satisfy their important interests when they need assistance to do so.

Consider two examples. If I'm single and lonely, I might expect that my best friend Bob will introduce me to that single employee he just met at work; if he doesn't, I might accuse Bob of failing to look out for my interests and of contributing to my life as an unhappy and asocial hermit. Still, this wouldn't seriously impact our relationship unless Bob displayed a pattern of such behaviors. On the other hand, in the case of Smith and Jones mentioned a few paragraphs back, Smith would have serious reason to question his friendship with Jones if Jones failed to offer Smith and his family the opportunity (say) to live in the basement of his mansion until they were back on their feet. One important difference between these cases derives from the importance and weight of the interests in question. Other things being equal, insofar as I stand to suffer less harm from being dateless on Saturday than Smith and his family stand to suffer from being homeless, Jones has a greater obligation based on friendship to provide shelter to Smith than Bob has to provide me with dates. This is so in part because Jones' failure to look after Smith's interests carries more evidential weight against the judgment that Jones is a good and loyal friend than does Bob's failure to hook me up with his coworkers. That

evidential weightiness derives from the persistent, non-volitional interests in question.

However, a person who fails to be responsive to his friend's weighty interests wrongs his friend in ways in which he doesn't wrong strangers by failing to be responsive to theirs. This distinguishes (2) and (6) in important ways.

Consider: although every special relationship is by its nature contingent, some are severable while others are not. For example, it is a contingent fact that Aristotle was the student of Plato, and it was possible, at any time while he was Plato's student, for Aristotle to cease being Plato's student by quitting the Academy. Let's call these kinds of special relations *dissolvable*. We also know that Aristotle fathered a son named Nichomachus. Like 'being a student of Plato,' the fact that Aristotle is 'father of Nicomachus' is a contingent fact about Aristotle. However, unlike the contingent, relational property 'being Plato's student,' it is not possible for Aristotle to quit the relation of 'father of Nicomachus'; such a relation even survives death. Let's call these sorts of special relations *indissolvable*.

Unfortunately, as soon as we begin to discuss the morality of dissolution, we find that our neatly distinguished pair of *metaphysical* terms fails to adequately capture the messy fact that we often think of our relationships in terms of *degrees of moral dissolvability*. Most of us recognize that it is much harder to exit a romantic relationship that has existed for seven years morally lien-free, so to speak, than one that has existed for seven days. Many (perhaps most) of our otherwise dissolvable relationships become *less dissolvable*, in the moral sense, the longer they last. We become caught up in webs of promises, debts, habits and expectations that define our moral communities, and the farther in we go the more tangled we become. The strands of these webs are our obligations, and prominent among them are our obligations of loyalty.

We need to recognize two points about 'dissolvability,' then. Metaphysically, relationships are dissolvable or they are not. Morally, we mean that a relationship approaches the necessity of metaphysical indissolvability the 'closer' the bonds of obligation tie two persons, and that blood, tragedy, promises, and the circumstances and happenings of normal life all play their part in increasing

such ties. Moral indissolvability, as we'll use the term below, refers to someone's inability to leave a relationship or fail to show loyalty in a relationship without thereby incurring moral blame.

Many of these thoughts are not new. Aristotle spends much time in the latter half of Book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* trying to sort out the implications of just these sorts of distinctions. As he writes,

The claims of justice differ ... injustice increases by being exhibited towards those who are *friends in a fuller sense*; e.g., it is a more terrible thing to defraud a comrade than a fellow citizen, more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger, and more terrible to wound a father than any one else. And the demands of justice also naturally increase with the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice increase between the same persons and have equal extension.<sup>24</sup>

Interpreted in terms of the distinction I have just made between dissolvable and indissolvable special relations, Aristotle is pointing to two moral claims:

<sup>24</sup> EN 7.9, 1159b 34 – 1160a 8, my italics. This phrase, "friends in a fuller sense," cannot be read as referring to the distinction between the three kinds of friendship already discussed earlier in Book 8. Rather, the qualifier "fuller" picks out the dissolvability of the relationships in question. What I have called an *indissolvable* relationships is what Aristotle would call friends in the 'fullest' sense.

1. Moral obligations of friendly care are greater in morally indissolvable special relations than in dissolvable special relations, and increase the more morally indissolvable a special relation becomes.

2. Claim (1) is a natural fact about human relationships.

The term 'greater' in (1) needs explanation. It means that the justice or injustice of an act should be judged relative to the moral dissolvability of a special relation, such that the justice or injustice of the same act  $x$  should be judged differently depending on the dissolvability of the relationship of the parties between whom the act occurs. Reference to the *nature* or *depth* of a special relationship - indicated by the moral dissolvability of the relationship - independently of what interest is at stake is one important factor in gauging the strength of an obligation of loyalty.

Claim (2) simply holds that (1) supervenes on human relationships as such. Thus, while special relationships involve claims of justice - claims which can exist between any two persons whatsoever - Aristotle is at pains to distinguish the kind of justice that obtains between friends, a paradigmatically 'natural,' non-contractual type of special relation, from the kind that exists between

strangers or even business partners. He draws the distinction this way:

The moral type [of justice between friends] is not on fixed terms; it makes a gift, or whatever it does, as to a friend; but one expects to receive as much or more, as having not given but lent; and if a man is worse off when the relation is dissolved than he was when it was contracted he will complain.<sup>25</sup>

The result of the combination of (1) and (2) is that the more morally indissolvable a relationship is, the greater the strength of the obligation of one party to the relationship to display loyalty by looking after the persistent, non-volitional interests of the other by reliably providing assistance or positive provision of care. The greater this obligation is, the harder it is to fail to meet this expectation, or to dissolve the relationship, without incurring moral blame.

While the depth of a special relationship is one determining factor of the strength of a special relationship, what interest is at stake is another. *Prima*

<sup>25</sup> EN 7.13, 1162b 30 – 34. Aristotle continues: "This [complaining] happens because all or most men, while they wish for what is noble, choose what is advantageous; now it is noble to do well by another without repayment, but it is the receiving of benefits that is advantageous" (1162b 35 – 1163a 1). Truly noble friends, in other words, love using an entirely different model of *philia* – perhaps *caritas*? – than 'all or most men,' who say one thing while expecting another.

*facie*, we have a greater obligation to protect and help people satisfy their persistent involuntary interests than other kinds of interests, and thus our failure to do so is more blameworthy than our failure to protect or satisfy other people's purely volitional needs, say, of a coozee for a cold soda on Superbowl Sunday.

For clarity's sake we could imagine *interests* and *depth of relationship* as axes of a Cartesian grid, and figure current moral debates between, say, Kantians (like Onora O'Neill) and Utilitarians (like Peter Singer) as debates about how, exactly, to plot the strength of our obligations of care on the graph.<sup>26</sup> However we draw the line of obligation, both parties are agreed in this: at no point does the line touch either axis, for there is no need so great that it overrides all other considerations, and no relation so indissolvable that we are obligated to satisfy someone's every demand in virtue of it.

Perhaps the value of a loyalty can be jointly derived from the strength of the obligation that, but for the special relationship in question, would not exist. This

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<sup>26</sup> See their debate surrounding famine relief. Peter Singer, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1 (1) 1972: 229-243; Onora O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger: An Essay on Poverty, Justice and Development* (Allen & Unwin: London, 1986).

suggests that loyalty is valuable because human flourishing is social, and for reasons having to do with the human condition, namely, as a moral corrective to the fragility of human communities and the vulnerability of our interests, personal and social. Loyalty, like the irascible passion of hope, makes the difficult acts of friendship, love and family less so by giving us reason to expect assistance from those best placed to give it when we have need of it.

It is the fact that *both* features ground the value of loyalty that leads us to confuse (2) and (6). The strength of the obligation increases - as does the injustice of failing to satisfy it - as the importance of someone's interest and the depth of the relationship generating the demand for care increases, and weaker as they decrease. This captures the phenomena that we can and do reasonably demand that those closest to us are most beholden to help us protect and satisfy our deep interests, and that we have greater moral permission not to assist strangers than not to assist friends (relative, always, to the depth of the interests in question and the depth of the friendship, or special relation in general).

Two explanations of this phenomena have been suggested by our survey of philosophers in this study. Both can be found in Aristotle. The first is that relations both strong and deep help constitute our identity as individuals. Individuals are in part constituted by their relations with other persons. Filling such roles as 'father,' 'son,' or 'brother' help to define us as moral agents. Someone who lacked others to whom he was obligated to be beneficent would not be a recognizably human agent.

Second, according to Aristotle, relations both strong and deep constitute the conditions for the possibility of political life. Human beings lack self-sufficiency in the radical sense that we cannot bring our essential nature to full actuality purely through our own efforts. We need a community of parents, friends, lovers and companions to teach and rear us, to give us a *language* without which conceptual thought is impossible and *shared activities* through which we realize our potential excellences. When we combine this dependence with the fact that human beings have needs that must be satisfied by a finite amount of resources, we have the beginnings of political justice - the first act of which, Aristotle notes, occurs between

those indissolvably related to us as parents in order to satisfy the acutely deep need for the necessities of life.<sup>27</sup>

However, Aristotle, Aquinas and Kant also suggest that one of our deepest and most persistent interests is not some set of physical and psychological necessities, but rather for friends who function as our moral correctives. If the good of one's friend includes the moral state of his character - whether this is understood as the full actualization of an Aristotelian self, or the fate of one's immortal soul, or one's fundamental disposition - then a truly good friend will be loyal not only by refusing to do or be complicit in our evil designs, but also by confronting us with the fact that our follies are follies (perhaps at risk of the friendship) in the hope that we reform. According to the analysis above, those most closely related to us have a greater obligation to us in this regard than in any other. Blind obedience to the

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<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2. This description misses the fact that such relations are *by nature* enjoyed, pursued and valued by us, of course. But then it need not be the case that a analysis of the social function of special relations captures their moral value or the reasons agents pursue them in societies. For an excellent discussion of this problem, see Roger Scruton, "Sacrilege and Sacrament," in *The Meaning of Marriage: Family, State, Market and Morals*, Robert P. George and Jean Bethke Elshtain, eds. (Spence Publishing Company, 2006).

whims of another isn't loyalty; it's a blamable failure to fulfill the duty of friendly care.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. Functions of Loyalty in Moral Discourse**

In this final section I'd like to respond to objection (a) by examining the ways in which claims of loyalty can interact with claims of moral right.

One classic view of what a moral right involves is known as the *Protected Permissions* view.<sup>29</sup> It holds that a person  $P'$ 's moral right to  $\varphi$  consists of the following Hohfeldian incidents:

1.  $P'$ 's claim right against interference by  $Y$  with  $P'$ 's  $\varphi$ -ing.
2.  $P'$ 's claim right against interference by  $Y$  with  $P'$ 's not  $\varphi$ -ing.
3.  $P'$ 's moral permissions (a) to  $\varphi$  and (b) not to  $\varphi$ , i.e., the absence of a moral duty on the part of  $P$  to  $\varphi$  or not to  $\varphi$ .

<sup>28</sup> True friendship, then, constitutes the opposite of 'moral danger.' It is, in fact, a near occasion of grace. For an explicitly contrary position, see Cocking and Kennet (2000) above.

<sup>29</sup> Throughout this section I'll be relying on William Edmundson's *An Introduction to Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), especially chapter 8, "A Right to Do Wrong? Two Conceptions of Moral Rights."

Ultimately, this understanding of moral rights holds that they involve both *positive freedoms* to perform or not to perform morally permissible actions, and *negative obligations* on the part of others not to interfere that freedom. In short, rights 'protect' our permissible activities, public or otherwise, from unreasonable outside interference.

Importantly, the protected permissions view entails that no one has a right to do what is morally wrong. For if to have a moral right is by definition to have a *moral permission* (such that one does nothing wrong by  $\varphi$ -ing or not  $\varphi$ -ing), then an action's being morally permissible is a necessary condition of having a moral right to perform that action.

One objection to this view of rights is that it identifies the *permissibility* of an action with the *possession* of a moral right. This objection won't do, however, for the protected permissions view only requires that  $\varphi$ 's being permissible is a necessary (and not a sufficient condition) for  $P$ 's having a moral right to  $\varphi$ . Seeing this, H.L.A. Hart went further and argued that moral permissibility isn't even a necessary condition for the possession of a moral right. Insofar as we can distinguish

between (a) having a *right* (*ius*) to  $\varphi$  and (b)  $\varphi$ 's being the *right* (*iustitia*) thing to do, he held that a person can have a *right* to  $\varphi$  without  $\varphi$  being the *right* thing to do, i.e., without there being good or overriding moral reasons that one ought/ought not to  $\varphi$ .<sup>30</sup> Having a right to  $x$  entails that  $x$  is *prima facie* permissible, even if doing  $x$  is, as such, *prima facie* wrong. If I owned a home on the National History Registry, for instance, my property rights to the home would entail that it is *prima facie* permissible to bulldoze it in order to build a parking lot, even if destroying buildings of national and historical value merely for profit is *prima facie* wrong.

We cannot, however, make rights and rightness completely independent of each other, for two reasons. First, if having a *right* to  $\varphi$  is a *prima facie* moral permission to  $\varphi$ , then the possession of a *right* entails something about the *prima facie* rightness of the act by definition. Second, nothing whatever would follow from the wrongness of an act about our permission, or duty, to interfere in it, especially in the case of our friends. Yet surely that is absurd: were Superman to play interested bystander while

<sup>30</sup> See Hart (1955). Hart ultimately concludes that obligations are not justified by the character of an action but by the relationship of the parties who transact them.

Carl punched me in the face, we would seriously doubt Clark's right to wear the cape. *A fortiori* it is precisely because God is the ultimate Superman - able everywhere and always (and partly for that reason obligated) to interfere in wrongdoing - that the existence of evil counts as evidence against His existence. This is not to say that the performance of every morally prohibited act generates obligations in others to interfere with the performance of the act; perhaps some acts, even wrong ones, are better off left 'private.'<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, even one case of an act whose wrongness generates an overriding obligation in others to interfere with its performance is sufficient to show that we cannot conceive of moral rights as trumping every other consideration (such as the intrinsic wrongness of an act). Insofar as some moral rights can be rendered *prima facie* considerations that can be overridden by the antecedent general moral obligations of others (such as the *prima facie* obligation to prevent evil when possible, especially in the case of our friends), the assertion that moral rights as a class override all other moral considerations is false.

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<sup>31</sup> Where this line should be drawn is a matter of some debate, beginning with J.S. Mill *On Liberty*, chapters 2 and 4.

Much more could be and has been said on this topic. We are merely concerned with the possibilities this conclusion opens for thinking about the function of loyalty in morality. Let us assume that the wrongness of an action can be a sufficient reason to override a person's *prima facie* right to do it (or fail to do it). Might there not be other instances of the same phenomena? Specifically, can claims of loyalty have precisely the same function, i.e., of special antecedent obligations weakening, and perhaps overriding, claims of right?

Let me make a comparison. Alice works hard for her money; in fact, she *earns* it, meaning that through the performance of some labor she gains property rights to remuneration. A simple molecular analysis of Alice's rights would involve several Hohfeldian incidents, namely,

- A *claim* against any other person(s) *B* spending Alice's money;
- A pair of *privileges* to spend Alice's money (or not) more or less as she wishes;
- A *power* of Alice to waive, annul, or transfer her claim to her money; and

- An *immunity* of Alice against *B*'s altering her power, privilege, or claim to her money.

What I wish to focus on is the *immunity*, the Hohfeldian incident that states that *B* lacks the ability to alter *A*'s other incidents. Immunities are what make theft wrong: they alone make it the case that a burglar cannot grab your television and make it his own by fiat (the way the government grabs your money, say, every April 15<sup>th</sup>). Most of the time, most of us rightfully exercise our property rights over our money in positive freedom, and Joe Schmoe on the street has no justification for interfering in our doing so, assuming that what we do with our money is morally permissible. Suppose a person wants to buy \$30,000 worth of comic books. Even if the noble Society for the Elimination of Comic Art thinks this is an affront to good sense, the person is within her rights to tell them to mind their own business. Were the person to attempt to use her money to buy illegal substances for underage youths, on the other hand, most of us (I assume) would feel the appropriate authority was entirely within its rights to confiscate the means of her wrongdoing. Her right to spend the money to do  $\varphi$  doesn't include every possible  $\varphi$ , since some  $\varphi$ 's are in fact morally impermissible.

A demand of loyalty works in precisely the same way. Imagine Scrooge handing over \$30,000 for several first edition comic books for his personal collection while Scrooge's young son, Miles, who needs a rare \$30,000 drug to survive a childhood cancer, whimpers nearby in the arms of his frazzled nurse. Imagine that the son has the *chutzpah* to ask his father to spend comic book money on the medicine he needs. Imagine, finally, that Scrooge responds as follows: "Well, my boy, I earned this money, and therefore I own it; and thus I do nothing wrong by exercising my Hohfeldian privilege not to spend it on you rather than myself. To say otherwise would make my rights of ownership over this money trivial and pointless."

Miles has three responses. First, he can appeal to the unequal weight of the interests at stake: his are deep, while Scrooge's are shallow. Miles stands to lose his life - a necessary condition for the realization of value - and incur a debt of gratitude, while Scrooge stands to lose \$30,000 (which he was going to spend anyway) and the opportunity to own some comic books, but keep his son. Given the depth of Miles's interests - caused by the weightiness of life - his claim has more *prima facie* weight than Scrooge's. That's evidence for the claim that it

would be wrong for Scrooge to spend \$30,000 on comic books in these circumstances.

That evidence in and of itself, however, might not be sufficient to override Scrooge's property right.<sup>32</sup> If it could, anyone's weighty interests could override Scrooge's property rights. Given the vast number of poor, downtrodden, and extremely needy people, Scrooge's property rights would be practically worthless if weighty interests were sufficient to make it wrong to spend money on oneself.<sup>33</sup> Insofar as most of us think that property rights are meaningful, Miles needs another argument to supplement his first argument. Here he can appeal to the *nature* of the relationship between himself and Scrooge: they are specially related as father and son. This relationship is an involuntary (on Miles's part), indissolvable relationship, and these kinds of relationships, I've argued - for reasons having to do with the very possibility of the *polis* - generate the strongest kinds of welfare rights.

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas would disagree, as he argues in *ST* I-II, Q. 66, a. 7. c and ad. 2: "It is not theft, properly speaking, to take secretly and use another's property in a case of extreme need: because that which he takes for the support of his life becomes his own property by reason of that need."

<sup>33</sup> Essentially, this is the picture famously painted by Peter Singer in "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (3) Spring 1972: 229 - 244.

While everyone has an imperfect obligation to assist others when they are able to do so, Scrooge's obligation is specially directed towards his son, and in the circumstances we've described he wrongs Miles if he fails to discharge it.

For most philosophers, Miles's appeals to the depth of the interests at stake and the strength of his relationship with Scrooge are jointly sufficient to ground Scrooge's obligation to assist Miles when he's able (as he is in our story).

Perhaps, however, Scrooge still wavers, mumbling that he has assisted Miles already, and that Miles should consider his debt paid. After all, Scrooge has been after these comic books for twenty years of his life, and like the oligarchic man in Plato's *Republic*, has organized his life around the goal of acquiring these particular comic books. Admittedly comic books are trivial things, but they are not trivial to Scrooge. What if Scrooge was a scientist on the verge of a world-changing discovery, or an artist about to complete his masterpiece: would Miles deny him that opportunity?

Miles's response to this final objection should be two-fold. First, he should point out that the examples of the

scientist and the artist aren't exactly analogous; Scrooge is falsely treating knowledge and art as if they were valuable only for their discoverers or creators.

Furthermore, Scrooge's objections presuppose that a person is encumbered only by those responsibilities he himself has chosen. This too is false: a person is in part constituted by the community in which he finds himself, and he is bound to that community by reciprocal ties of obligations of care. Second, Miles should point out, those communal ties of obligation, strongest in families and indissolvable relations, do not fade over time or disappear like a coin in a Salvation Army bucket. They are persistent obligations of care, and thus obligations to be loyal to the persons to whom we are specially related, i.e., are obligations that demand reliable and regular satisfaction (much like the deep interests they ultimately protect). They cannot be discharged once and for all like the terms of a business contract.

Perhaps Miles even says these things out of care for Scrooge's character, noting that the slippery slope to viciousness is paved, in Scrooge's case, with first-edition comic books.

Perhaps Scrooge isn't denying that his relationship with Miles is dissolvable, but that his resulting obligations are limited, and that the limit has been reached. (In the story we have told this is hardly the case.) Yet the main point is this: if Miles' arguments in fact carry evidentiary weight in support of his demand for assistance, then moral reasons grounded in special relations and loyalty are genuine moral reasons. Otherwise all of Miles' arguments are simply instances of *non sequitor*.

More formally, what I mean is this: *A*'s demand that *B* exercise positive care for *A*, if based on friendship or special relations, is a justified demand - that is, entailing an overriding obligation - if and only if *A*'s special relationship with *B* is 'strong,' *A*'s need for *B*'s care is 'deep,' and those properties are involved in a relationship of loyalty in the senses described in the second part of this chapter. *B*'s failure to discharge obligations such as these through the reliable exercise of positive care entails, *ceteris paribus*, entails that *B* has done something both wrong (unjust) and blameworthy (i.e., *B* can be held responsible for the effects of his action on *A*). Furthermore, the stronger the relationship between *A* and *B* and the deeper *A*'s need for *B*'s assistance - the

greater the justification A has for claiming B's loyalty - the more right-like and overriding A's claim becomes.

If this is correct, then claims of friendship and loyalty have at least two roles to play in morality. First, as illustrated above, a claim of loyalty helps motivate particular obligations of care in special relations. Second, claims of loyalty can render claims of moral right *prima facie* moral reasons, able to be overridden in particular circumstances like nearly all other moral reasons. Rights and loyalties function as a system of checks and balances on each other in moral discourse, perhaps even more so than the traditional opposition of rights and considerations of utility. Thus their claim to be genuine moral reasons.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this final chapter we have sought to locate loyalty in the wider sphere of morality by identifying it as a genuinely moral reason. After arguing that we can analyze the force of claims of loyalty in terms of the ways in which the strength of a special relation focuses the direction of an obligation to assist someone to satisfy her deep interests, we concluded that one function of claims of loyalty is to motivate persons to reliably provide positive

care, sometimes by providing reasons that override contrary assertions of moral rights.

Ultimately, however, the loyal person - over and above the person who simply does caring acts - is a person who is motivated by the desire that the object of his loyalty be as good as possible. This entails two things. First,

1.  $X$  can reliably perform outwardly beneficent acts for  $Y$  without being for that reason loyal to  $Y$ .

This is so because it is possible for  $X$  to reliably care for another person in unjust ways, or in ways that do not assist  $Y$  in being as good as possible. It is also possible because  $X$  may just, like St. Francis, perform beneficent acts for everyone, while being loyal to no particular person. Hare's Fanatical Nazi is a case in point of the first possibility. Second,

2.  $X$  can fail to reliably perform outwardly beneficent acts for  $Y$  without being for that reason disloyal to  $Y$ .

If the truly loyal person works for our good when we are not ourselves good, then the person who is truly loyal to us may criticize us, withhold affection from us, refuse to spend time with us, refuse to participate in some of our

activities, and even fail to share in our joys and pains insofar as these are bad - that is, fail to display the 'marks of friendship' Aristotle attributes to virtuous friends. Loyalty is in this regard like courage: the excesses of courage and loyalty are symptomologically similar to their respective virtues while differing in their motives. Yet loyalty differs from courage in that the symptomology of true loyalty can be similar to its deficiency. Sometimes the work of love is the work of upbuilding. Perhaps always.

## CONCLUSION

In the Introduction, we set out to survey the positions several prominent thinkers regarding the relationship of friendship and loyalty. There we noted that the various thinkers in our historical survey disagree with one another about the role that beliefs about the character of one's friend play in the justification of special relations and obligations of loyalty. Aristotle argues that we can have good reasons, based on beliefs about the character of our friends, for friendship and loyalty. Aquinas argued that in addition to beliefs about the character of the other person, love requires further beliefs and dispositions (hope and charitable presumption) to provide a motivational warrant for friendship and loyalty. Although Kant argued that ideal friendship is unattainable, and loyalty is grounded in nothing outside of our own quest for perfection, we discussed a Kantian position similar to Aristotle's that justifies friendship and loyalty in our imperfect will and our obligation to become good. Kierkegaard argued that the only possible happy love - *agape* - does away with belief entirely. Unlike *eros* and *philia*, which cannot escape the risk caused by their dependence on beliefs about the other, Kierkegaard argued

that a agapic love contains its own justification for friendship and loyalty regardless of the worthiness of its object.

We then tried to capture the concern of these philosophers about the relationship between belief and justification in the following argument:

1. Loyalty is a necessary condition of friendship.
2. Loyalty requires beliefs about the value of the friend or the relationship which derive its justification from knowledge (justified true beliefs) about (a) one's own character and commitments, (b) the friend's character and commitments, and (c) some shared properties between (a) and (b).
3. There is no knowledge of (a) and (b).
4. Loyalty is never justified, and neither is friendship.

Our survey has suggested a simple response to this argument.

The response is that (2) is too strong, since issues of uncertainty - what we called the 'epistemic' problem - are in some sense overcome by the nature of the self. For

instance, both Aristotle and Kant – each in their own way – hold that

1. The self is a teleological and normative concept.

Each of them also holds that

2. The self is naturally social,

meaning that to be a person is 'always already' to be engaged in morally indissolvable relationships with other selves. Other selves, as normative beings, demand our moral attention to the point of generating obligations in us to look out for their interests. The strength of these obligations vary, as discussed in chapter six, according to the nature of the special relationship and the depth of the interests at stake. Yet in the end we find that we are obligated *despite* some risks to our own interests: risk alone is not independently sufficient to override our moral obligations to our loved ones.

Kierkegaard got this much correct, loosely speaking: love requires action for the sake of the other even in the absence of knowledge of the character of the other. And all of our thinkers believe that love requires virtue as well, be this Thomistic hope, Kantian respect, or Kierkegaardian fidelity. Such hope, respect and fidelity

are all ways of describing loyal motives, and are all practical dispositions to care for the interests of others that override our lack of certainty about whether our friends deserve it. Finally, consider the possibility of *heroic* loyalty, say, of a loyalty that is praiseworthy without knowledge of the character of the other: Desdemona, having consecrated her "soul and fortunes" to Othello (I.3.254), for instance, presumes Othello's ignorance of her fidelity and commends herself to her "kind lord" (V.2.125). We could believe that through this final action, Desdemona gives Othello the evidence he needs to overcome his false beliefs and – reciprocating his suggestion that she reconcile herself with heaven (V.2.26-8) – to reconcile himself to the same. If loyalty such as this is praiseworthy in the absence of knowledge – as distinct from loyalty in the face of definite immorality – then (2), as it stands, is false.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I admit that this scene can be read other ways. It is important to the argument above, for instance, that Desdemona believe that Othello's ignorance lessens his responsibility for her murder to some degree, and that her final words be interpreted as working for his redemption rather than expressing ignorance of plain evidence of his moral blameworthiness, e.g., of her death at his hands. The latter would not count as a praiseworthy act of loyalty, as I argued in chapter six in respect to Hare's Fanatic Nazi.

Rather, our authors have suggested, love works for lovability in its object through hope and charitable presumption, as Aquinas would say, and the condition for this possibility isn't positive knowledge of another person's deserving of that love, but rather their *redeemability*. If it is part of the logic of love and special relations to work for the good of the other, and the ultimate interest of persons *qua* persons is the development of a morally good will, then our obligation to work for this interest cannot be discharged so long as we and our friends or special relations live. While our other obligations may be limited in ways discussed in chapter six, I submit that the 'sticky' quality of loyalty, as Kleinig put it, and its value, are ultimately grounded both by this more fundamental obligation, which has no limit, and the teleological nature of the human person.

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