Morality and the Good Friend

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2022

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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In this dissertation, I evaluate three normative ethical theories based on whether they can overcome what I call the burdensomeness objection. According to this objection, a normative ethical theory is objectionably burdensome if acting on the reasons it prescribes does not leave sufficient space for the agent's own projects, relationships, and so on. The realization of such values is necessary for living a good human life, so it would be unduly restrictive of a theory to curtail the pursuit of them. Throughout the dissertation, I use friendship as my test case for the burdensomeness objection. This is for two reasons: first, friendship is a particularly representative instance of the sort of value we want protected; and second, the philosophers whose theories I evaluate are (for the most part) themselves concerned to show the compatibility of their theories with friendship. Even so, I argue in the first two chapters that moral metaethical constitutivism and T.M. Scanlon's contractualism, respectively, fail to show they can overcome the burdensomeness objection. I suggest in the conclusion that an Aristotelian virtue ethics is likely to overcome the objection, but only if the view adopts a suitable conception of character friendship. I propose one such conception in the third chapter.

Keywords: normative ethics, friendship, morality, constitutivism, contractualism, Aristotle.

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Acknowledgements

The writing of this dissertation would have been impossible without the guidance and support of many individuals.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Japa Pallikkathayil. Japa's creativity in packaging arguments into a coherent and compelling whole and exacting critical eye have been invaluable for my work and growth as a philosopher. I am greatly indebted to Japa's challenging questions and suggestions, as well as her generosity with her time and attention.

I am also very grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee. To Jennifer Whiting for her perceptiveness and thorough attention both to the forest and the trees. To Kyla Ebels-Duggan for her insight and keen ability to relate broader philosophical themes. To Nandi Theunissen for her thoughtful engagement with some central concepts of my dissertation. Both I and my dissertation have been much improved by their feedback. I am thankful also to Stephen Engstrom, Jed Lewinsohn, and Michael Thompson for their feedback at crucial junctures in my project.

I am thankful also to colleagues at Pittsburgh for their friendship and conversation: Annika Froese, Aaron Salomon, Aaron Segal, Alnica Visser, Daniel Webber, and Pablo Zendejas Medina.

For love and support throughout my studies, I am indebted to many friends and family: especially my mother, Clara Lambros Purdy; my father, John Purdy; my sister, Christine Purdy; and my good friend, Christos Kaparos.

Lastly, I owe special thanks to Caleb Reidy. Without his support, conversation, patience, and willingness to play board games with me, I could not have written this dissertation.

Introduction

1. The burdensomeness objection

Utilitarianism has received much criticism for being too demanding.[1] According to this family of criticisms, if an agent is to be a good moral agent, her life will be swamped by morality; there is insufficient room for the agent's own relationships, projects, and so on if she is to be moral. But do other normative ethical theories fare better with respect to these criticisms, or has utilitarianism unfairly taken the brunt of their force? In this dissertation, I provide a partial answer to this question by arguing that some major contemporary normative ethical theories – including T.M. Scanlon's contractualism and Christine Korsgaard's and Michael Smith's separate accounts of moral metaethical constitutivism – cannot overcome what I call *the burdensomeness objection*. Of the views I consider, only an Aristotelian virtue ethics is capable of meeting the burdensomeness objection and it can do so only after reconsideration of Aristotelian character friendship.

According to the burdensomeness objection, a normative ethical theory is objectionably burdensome if acting on the reasons it prescribes does not leave sufficient space for the agent's own projects, relationships, and so on. Realizing such values is necessary for living a good human life, so it would be unduly restrictive of a theory to curtail the pursuit of them. The normative ethical reasons I am interested in, which are often referred to as "moral" in

[1] For expressions of this concern, see Bernard Williams (1981), Susan Wolf (1982), and Peter Railton (1984).

contemporary discourse, are concerned with what we owe to each other (or, in Aristotelian parlance, justice in the general sense).[2]

Throughout this dissertation, I focus on friendship as a representative value that a theory should accommodate to overcome the burdensomeness objection. If it turns out that a theory fails to accommodate space for being a good friend, then we have good reason to be skeptical that it could accommodate other important values, like fulfilling work. My attention to friendship in particular involves two aspects. First, the philosophers I consider are concerned with friendship: Scanlon and Korsgaard attempt to show that they can secure space for friendship with the hope that this treatment will generalize to other values and Aristotle devotes two out of 10 books in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to friendship. So, these philosophers are also concerned to show they can overcome the burdensomeness objection. Second, friendship is a particularly important and interesting value. It is particularly important insofar as friends of the best sort are necessary for a meaningful human life. And it is particularly interesting insofar as friends seem to *owe* things to one another: there are certain things you *must* do for your friend and failure to act accordingly can be devastating to the friendship. As such, it would be especially bad if a theory required an agent to flout these reasons of friendship. It would amount not only to jeopardizing an important and crucial source of value in your own life, but also to failing your friend.

[2] See *Nicomachean Ethics* V, in particular 1129b12-1130a13. Justice in the general or political sense is virtue as it is codified in law. It governs the relations between the citizens of the state (between neighbors). So, the reasons of general justice appear to be what we owe to each other. As Aristotle puts it, "justice, alone of the virtues, is thought to be 'another's good', because it is related to our neighbor" (1130a4-5). While this is a statement of an *endoxon* from Plato's *Republic,* the part that Aristotle distances himself from is just that justice, as a particular virtue, is *alone* concerned with others' good. Aristotle claims that general justice includes the particular virtue of justice, but also other virtues as well, since many of the virtues involve rightful conduct with respect to others.

2. Friendship

The conception of friendship I presuppose should be both uncontroversial and familiar: it requires that two agents act on reasons for each other, share affection for each other, be a committed friend to that particular person, and adopt and share the ends of each other. These seem to be necessary for a meaningful friendship, though perhaps not sufficient.

To leave sufficient space for friendship, normative ethical reasons need not always cede to those of friendship. It is reasonable for a theory to require that I not kill a friend's uncle so that she may gain her inheritance sooner. If this is a reason of friendship at all, it is surely merely recommended by rather than required of friendship. But the theory should not require that one abandon one's friends in order to, e.g., promote the general good; nor should it prevent one from assisting a friend in need rather than a stranger, even if that stranger is in greater need. Such acts are incompatible with good friendship. To meet my desideratum, what we owe to each other must cede to friendship in certain important cases, not *all* cases.

Let me give an example to clarify what I have in mind. Consider the plight of Samwise Gamgee at the end of Book IV of *The Lord of the Rings*.[3] When Sam believes that Frodo has been killed by Shelob, he recognizes that he must take the Ring from Frodo's body to finish the quest. As a member of the Fellowship, Sam is entrusted to see that the quest does not fail. And as the *last* member of the Fellowship, the duty falls to him. He is therefore morally required (or has a strong moral reason or reason of justice) to travel to Mount Doom and avoid capture by the

[3] J.R.R. Tolkien (2004), 735. I leave aside concerns that Frodo is Sam's "master"; if it were Merry and Pippin in this situation, I believe the reasons would be the same. Note also that if Frodo and Sam's relation were merely one of master-servant, and not also one of meaningful friendship, it would be hard to see why Sam would feel torn about leaving his presumed-dead employer to suffer defilement by Orcs given that all the good in the world hangs on the line. I also leave aside concerns that Sam has additional moral reason to protect Frodo insofar as he promised Gandalf he would not leave Frodo's side. That promise was made to protect Frodo in his errand, and given that Frodo is presumed dead, I do not believe that promise presides over this situation. (Sam also does not seem to think it does, as he does not contemplate this in his back-and-forth discussion about what to do.)

Enemy to the best of his abilities.[4] But he hears that Orcs saw Frodo, and he now also believes that he must defend Frodo's body: "My place is by Mr. Frodo," Sam says to himself. Orcs are not known to be very respectful of bodies (or living things). As Frodo's loyal friend, Sam feels he must defend his friend's body for as long as he can. Insofar as friendship requires protecting the interests and furthering the ends of one's friend, Sam has a strong reason (or requirement) of friendship to defend Frodo. This is so even though Sam knows that there are too many Orcs, and that he will fall (either into capture or to death) in Frodo's defense. What is Sam to do? Must he go on with the quest, or turn back to defend Frodo?

Sam decides that he must turn back, and the narrator endorses this judgment.[5] While Sam fails to realize his intention to defend Frodo's body due to extreme exhaustion, I claim that Sam was right to choose to act on the reason of friendship. It is important to Sam that he is Frodo's friend; he centrally values himself under this description and strongly identifies with his role as protector of Frodo. It would be objectionably burdensome of a theory to require that Sam instead fulfill his oath to act as Ringbearer and thereby flout an important reason of friendship.

These are the cases with which I am concerned, then: cases in which a strong reason (or requirement) of friendship putatively conflicts with one of morality. It would be objectionably burdensome if Sam were required to abandon Frodo's body – both to Sam's own good and to his and Frodo's friendship. While Sam would perhaps be valiant and just if he assumed the role of Ringbearer, he would not be a good friend.

[4] As Sam debates what he must do when he finds Frodo 'dead', he envisions the Council of Elrond telling him the following in response to the thought that the pact required only Frodo to take the Ring: "'And the Council gave him [Frodo] companions, so that the errand should not fail. And you are the last of the Company. The errand must not fail.'" (Tolkien 2004, 732)

[5] "He *knew* now where his place was and had been: at his master's side." (Tolkien 2004, 735, my emphasis) I believe that Tolkien also thought this was the right thing to do, but since Frodo is the narrator here, it at least reflects his and Sam's judgments.

So, if a theory fails to permit Sam to turn back to Frodo, this is sufficient to show that the theory cannot overcome the burdensomeness objection. Accordingly, in what follows, I often use Sam's plight as my test case. Occasionally, however, other cases are more amenable to a lucid analysis of the various interests at hand.

3. Two strategies

There are two strategies for normative ethical theories to make space for being a good friend, depending on whether they accept the possibility of genuine conflict between reasons of friendship and morality, or not.

The first strategy is *internalist*: it denies that there can be genuine conflict between moral reasons and reasons of friendship; any conflict is merely apparent. This strategy preserves the unity and coherence of our reasons while attempting to make space for all the values we have reason to pursue. I call this strategy "internalist" insofar as it shows the compatibility of friendship and morality by maintaining they are in some sense sensitive to each other; they are sufficiently sensitive such that they cannot in principle conflict. What that sensitivity looks like depends upon the particulars of the view.

For instance, Scanlon's way of cashing out the sensitivity of friendship and morality is to build into what we owe to each other respect for other values we have reason to pursue. In this iteration of the strategy, what I owe to you results from calculations concerning a balance of our interests; the value of what we owe to each other is thus something like an interpersonal amalgam of what there is all-things-considered reason to do. The result is that the reason output from this calculus is conclusive; no genuine conflict exists. Since our other interests are factored into whether there is a moral reason in such circumstances, it is supposed to be the case that this conclusiveness is compatible with the pursuit of other things we have reason to value.

To apply the internalist strategy to our case, Sam has either a reason of friendship to defend Frodo or a reason of morality to keep his word to the Council of Elrond. But he cannot have both reasons; there is only one that applies to the situation, and it is conclusive.[6] Which *prima facie* reason pertains in Sam's circumstances depends on the particulars of how morality and friendship are sensitive to each other.[7]

The second strategy is *externalist*: it accepts that there can be genuine conflict between moral reasons and reasons of friendship, but nonetheless aims to show that good agents can also be good friends by permitting that the reason of friendship may prevail in such a conflict. It is possible that one may permit conflict between moral and other reasons but fail to utilize the externalist strategy if one also holds that moral reasons always take priority over other reasons. One might simply deny the importance of my desideratum. As noted, however, most of the authors I consider explicitly attempt to show they make space for friendship (Smith is the exception). I call this strategy "externalist" insofar as it aims to show the compatibility of friendship and morality without claiming that they are sensitive to each other. What is essential to externalist accounts are: (i) an admission that what we owe to each other and reasons from other values may genuinely conflict and (ii) the claim that in cases of conflict we need not act on the moral reason; it can be permissible to act on the non-moral reason.

To apply this to our case, perhaps Sam *does* owe it to the Council of Elrond to keep his word and continue the quest. Nonetheless, he may stay to defend Frodo. While it may appear that this

[6] Strictly speaking, it would be that friendship and morality agree that Sam should either defend Frodo or continue the quest. I don't think it matters for my purposes whether there is just one reason to act, or two reasons which recommend the same action.

[7] For instance, again in Scanlon's case, whether Sam has moral reason to keep his word depends on what else is at stake. If there are no competing interests relevant to the situation, he would be required to keep his word. But there may be no such requirement if there are other strong competing interests in the situation. In this case, despite the Council's strong interest in Sam keeping his word, it is possible that Sam's interest of friendship in promoting Frodo's good is sufficiently weighty and important that the Council has no claim to Sam's word in such circumstances. Whatever interest is stronger is protected.

involves an abandonment of the claim that reasons concerning what we owe to each other are conclusive (and that perhaps we don't actually "owe" such things to each other), in fact externalist accounts claim that there are *multiple* sources of obligation. Sam is unconditionally required to keep his word *and* unconditionally required to defend Frodo.

4. Overview of chapters

In what follows, I present some major normative ethical theories, classify them as either internalist or externalist, and analyze what resources they have to deliver on the strategy. In brief, my findings are as follows.

In the first chapter, I argue that Korsgaard's constitutivism, as presented in her seminal *The Sources of Normativity*, is committed to the externalist strategy. This is because Korsgaard argues that: (i) reasons of friendship and moral reasons can conflict, (ii) both kinds of reasons issue obligations, and (iii) sometimes it can be permissible to act on the reason of friendship. But Korsgaard is a constitutivist. She argues that acting on moral reasons is *constitutive* of action. Since acting on reasons of friendship is not constitutive of action, it is puzzling how one could then *act* on the reason of friendship at the expense of the constitutive moral reason. I argue that no normative basis for such a permission is forthcoming. Sam may have a reason to defend Frodo, but since fulfilling his oath to the Council of Elrond is constitutive of agency, he *must* act on the constitutive condition of action. So, Korsgaard fails to prove the compatibility of being moral and being a good friend.

In the same chapter, I argue that Smith's capacities account of constitutivism would be committed to the internalist strategy, were Smith to show concern for accommodating other values in his moral theory. His view is internalist because he claims that moral reasons always override other reasons; he denies any genuine conflict in cases where the recommendation from a

moral reason comes apart from that of another "reason." If he were then to show that being a good friend is compatible with being a good moral agent, it would have to be the case that these overriding moral reasons are sensitive to reasons of friendship. However, I argue that Smith does not show this and so does not show that the good agent can also be a good friend. Smith identifies the protection and promotion of a pair of capacities – desire realization and knowledge acquisition – as constitutive of agency and he magnifies the scope of concern for these capacities to include *everyone*'s. It follows that Sam would not be permitted to defend Frodo rather than pursue the quest, given that the capacities of *every* inhabitant of Middle Earth are on the line if the quest fails.

More generally, because constitutivism begins with a conception of *agency* but friendship is a distinctively *human* value, I argue that neither strategy is promising for constitutivists. It is unlikely that we must be good friends in order to act at all, or that agency in general is sensitive to reasons of friendship. Accordingly, I argue both that the burdensomeness objection sticks to Korsgaard and Smith and that it is likely to stick to *any* moral metaethical constitutivist.

In the second chapter, I argue that Scanlon's contractualism, as presented in his *What We Owe to Each Other*, is committed to the internalist strategy. As I noted above, this is because Scanlon argues that the reasons of morality and friendship are sufficiently sensitive to each other such that there is no genuine conflict between the sets of reasons. But he fails to deliver on showing the compatibility of morality with being a good friend for two reasons. First, his conception of friendship is built on the demands of morality, such that there is only unidirectional sensitivity of friendship to morality. This amounts to protecting space for "friendship" only by denying that it issues reasons in all the circumstances we think it does. And second, it is unclear what the proposed mechanism for weighting interests within the

contractualist calculus is supposed to be. In this case, perhaps morality and friendship are sensitive to each other, but it is unclear how. Accordingly, I argue that the burdensomeness objection does stick to Scanlon's contractualism, despite its seemingly greater promise.

In the third chapter, I turn to Aristotle. One might be surprised to see Aristotle appear here for more than a quick remark that *of course* an account that begins with a conception of the *human* good would leave space for distinctively human values. Theoretically, this is of course right. But the substance of Aristotle's account could leave us unsatisfied. He could protect space for only an over-moralized version of character friendship, in which case he would suffer from the same kind of problem that Scanlon does: his account would pay merely lip service to accommodating friendship, while in fact leaving space only for a gerrymandered form of acquaintanceship.

So, my task in the third chapter is to evaluate whether Aristotle's conception of character friendship is the gerrymandered one that turns friendship into a quest for one's virtuous development – for which some contemporary readers of Aristotle argue – or is, rather, the intuitively plausible and meaningful form of friendship in which we adopt and share each other's ends and care for the other for herself. I argue that the most plausible understanding of Aristotelian character friendship is the latter: the defining feature of friendship is to wish the other well for herself, which has decidedly practical upshots. To prove that this is a good conception of friendship, I flesh it out in more detail and in doing so defend a novel account of neo-Aristotelian character friendship.

In the conclusion, I sketch out the task that lies ahead for Aristotelian virtue ethics to decisively show it is immune to the burdensomeness objection. With a good conception of friendship in hand, the Aristotelian will have to show that the virtues, especially as they concern

how we act with respect to others, are sensitive to the reasons of friendship. Accordingly, I argue that Aristotle can successfully avail himself of the internalist strategy. I do not have the space to delve into the details of such an account, but I give a brief defense for thinking that Aristotle has better resources to deliver on the internalist strategy than either Scanlon or Smith. Insofar as each virtue is a part of the same whole – the good human life – there is a plausible means of arbitrating between *prima facie* conflicts that will respect whatever best realizes the individual's good. So, it is highly plausible that an Aristotelian virtue ethics can permit Sam to defend Frodo.

We will see, then, that utilitarianism is not uniquely susceptible to the charge of imposing burdensome requirements on the agents who would have to carry out their doctrines. Loyal adherents to contractualism's or constitutivism's moral theory may find themselves bereft of other sources of value. Unsurprisingly, however, a theory that grounds normativity in the human good is unlikely to have such a problem. But the devil is in the details, as we shall see.

1

A critique of moral metaethical constitutivism

1.1. Introduction

As I have noted in the introduction, the aim of this chapter is to gauge whether moral metaethical constitutivism can overcome what I have called *the burdensomeness objection*, which is that a moral theory is objectionably burdensome if it does not leave sufficient space for the agent's own projects, relationships, and so on if she is to be moral. It is objectionably burdensome because a good moral agent should also be able to be a good friend, a good baker or teacher or whatever work or hobby one finds fulfilling, and so on. Realizing such values is one of the most meaningful parts of living a human life.

As I have indicated, I focus on friendship in particular because it is a good example of an important human value that we have reason to want accommodated. It is a good example in part because some constitutivists explicitly attempt to show that they can secure space for it and in part because we intuitively recognize that friendship exerts deontic pressure on us – there are certain things we must do for our friends, that we are perhaps *required* to do. Friendship is therefore my test case for the burdensomeness objection, but my treatment of it generalizes to any similarly structured non-moral value.

In what follows, I argue that constitutivism is ill-poised to leave sufficient space for friendship; it is unlikely to overcome the burdensomeness objection.

1.2. Friendship

It is worth reproducing the conception of friendship I presuppose: it requires that two agents act on reasons for each other, share affection for each other, be a committed friend to that particular

person, and adopt and share the ends of each other. These seem to be necessary for a meaningful friendship, though perhaps not sufficient.

Recall also that to leave sufficient space for friendship, moral reasons need not always cede to those of friendship. For instance, it is reasonable for morality to require that I not kill a friend's uncle so that she may gain her inheritance sooner. To meet my desideratum, morality must cede to friendship in certain important cases, not *all* cases.

Let us reconsider the example of Sam Gamgee to clarify this point. I reproduce the case in full for maximum clarity. When Sam believes that Frodo has been killed by Shelob, he recognizes that he must take the Ring from Frodo's body to finish the quest. Sam knows that as a member of the Fellowship, he is entrusted to see that the quest does not fail. And as the *last* member of the Fellowship, the duty falls to him. He is therefore morally required (or has strong moral reason) to travel to Mount Doom and avoid capture by the Enemy to the best of his abilities. But he hears that Orcs saw Frodo, and he now also believes that he must go to defend Frodo's body: "My place is by Mr. Frodo," he says to himself. Orcs are not known to be very respectful of bodies (or living things). As Frodo's most loyal friend, Sam feels he must defend his friend's body for as long as he can. Insofar as friendship seems to require protecting the interests and furthering the ends of one's friend, it seems Sam has a strong reason (or a requirement) of friendship to defend Frodo. This is so even though Sam knows that there are too many Orcs, and that he will fall (either into capture or to death) in Frodo's defense. What is Sam to do? Must he go on with the quest, or turn back to defend Frodo?

I have claimed that it would be excessively burdensome of a moral theory to require that Sam act as Ringbearer and thereby flout an important obligation of friendship. So, a theory's failure to

permit Sam to turn back to Frodo would be sufficient to demonstrate that it does not overcome the burdensomeness objection. Accordingly, I use Sam's plight as my test case.

1.3. A dilemma for constitutivism

In this section I present a dilemma for constitutivism. I briefly present the horns of the dilemma before defining constitutivism. While the constitutivist can take either horn – internalist or externalist – problems exist for both. The problem facing the externalist is more damning, but the roadblocks for the internalist are not promising, either.

The two strategies moral theories may deploy to leave sufficient space for friendship – which two strategies I presented in the introduction – are the dual horns of the dilemma. The first horn is the internalist strategy. Recall that the internalist aims to ensure that morality is not too demanding by showing that it is compatible with other values; there is no possibility of genuine conflict between moral and other reasons. If morality is already sensitive to other values (such as friendship), then even if moral reasons take priority over other reasons, the good moral agent should have sufficient space to pursue other things she has reason to value.

The second horn is the externalist strategy. Recall that the externalist aims to ensure that morality is not too demanding by claiming that even though there can be genuine conflict between moral and non-moral reasons, it may be permissible to act on the non-moral reason in such conflict. If morality bends to other values in the right sorts of cases, then there may be sufficient space for friendship in the life of the moral agent.

We will see that constitutivism can take either horn. Constitutivism holds that the properties constitutive of some kind – an object, event, activity, etc. – ground or explain the normative

standards for instantiations of that kind.[8] This view begins with a set of natural facts about what makes something the kind of thing it is and then makes a normative claim that these facts set a standard for all instantiations of that kind.[9] So, for instance, if a basketball is constitutively a bouncy sphere with a grippy exterior, then an object is a good or bad basketball, or a basketball at all, depending on whether these properties can appropriately be predicated of it. A very smooth bouncy ball is not a basketball, an underinflated grippy sphere is not a good basketball, and so on. In this way, the properties constitutive of something not only determine if an instance is a good or bad instance; they also determine what counts as an instance at all.[10]

A related view is that of metaethical constitutivism (or constitutivism about reasons), which holds that whatever principles, aims, etc. are constitutive of agency ground or explain reasons or normativity. Constitutivists disagree about what is in fact constitutive of agency, but they agree that whatever it is gives us reason to act (though they disagree about how exactly this normative derivation goes). A variant of this constitutivist view is that *moral* reasons are grounded in what is constitutive of agency; this is a further substantive commitment. On these views, morality reduces to what we, as agents, must do in order to be agents at all.[11] It is this moral metaethical

[8] See Michael Bukoski (2016), Paul Katsafanas (2018), Jeremy David Fix (2019), and Karl Schafer (2018) for more in-depth statements of constitutivism.

[9] For instance, in the case of activities, Katsafanas uses a "relatively minimal normative claim" which he calls "Success": "If X aims at G, then G is a standard of success for X." (Katsafanas 2011, 629)

[10] One might wonder how a putative instance of some kind can qualify as an instance of that kind at all if it fails to meet the standard of the kind. That is, why should we think that there could be bad e.g. action, rather than something either qualifying as action (by meeting the standard) or not (by failing to do so)? Katsafanas points out that if the standard for the kind comes in degrees, then it can be possible for something to qualify as of that kind while not being a particularly good instance of it. If the standard is simple, however – if it does not admit of degrees – then it will be the case that either an a is an A, or it is not. See Katsafanas (2013) (He also argues that Korsgaard fails to accommodate bad action by espousing only a simple constitutive standard.) For a related discussion about the possibility of error in constitutivism, see also Douglas Lavin (2004) and Fix (2020).

[11] Christine Korsgaard is perhaps the most well-known constitutivist of this stripe. Oliver Sensen, like Korsgaard, reads Immanuel Kant as a constitutivist; see Sensen (2013). As we will see, Michael Smith also engages in this project; see Smith (2013) and Smith (2015). So does Katsafanas, who aims to derive a Nietzschean ethics from the will to power, which he claims is constitutive of agency; see Katsafanas (2011). On the other hand, J. David Velleman is a constitutivist about reasons – he thinks that action constitutively aims at self-understanding –

constitutivism that concerns me in this paper; I will hereafter refer to it simply as "constitutivism" for ease of expression.

If reasons of morality arise from what is constitutive of agency, then the constitutivist will have secured some attractive properties of morality.[12] For one, every agent would have reason to do what is moral insofar as the reasons of morality are built into her set of reasons; this secures morality's universality.[13] This is because moral requirements would be reduced to rational requirements. Just as every agent has reason to take the means to their ends (the instrumental principle is nearly universally accepted as a rational requirement), the constitutivist holds that every agent has reason to act morally. Additionally, constitutivism would guarantee the conclusiveness of morality. If it is constitutive of agency to do what is moral, then one ought to do the moral thing. If one is to act at all (and, agents must), then one must act morally. If one fails to do what is constitutive of agency, then one fails as an agent.[14]

However, the universality and conclusiveness of moral reasons make constitutivism susceptible to the burdensomeness objection. Depending on what exactly is constitutive of agency, and therefore what exactly morality demands, it may be tyrannical to the agent's life and fail to leave sufficient space for friendship.[15] To see this, assume (implausibly) that the aim to

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but is skeptical that morality can be explained by only what is constitutive of agency; see Velleman (2009). I will not consider neo-Aristotelian accounts (though Schafer does) since they analyze not agency but the human life-form (which is broader than agency). (Note that Korsgaard seems to take the concepts "human" and "agent" to be equivalent.)

[12] For arguments against constitutivism's ability to guarantee these conclusions, see David Enoch (2006), Enoch (2011), and Olof Leffler (2019). My concerns are downstream from here, so I grant the success of the constitutivist moral project for the sake of argument.

[13] See Smith (2013) and Katsafanas (2013), the latter of which notes that constitutivism can also be seen as bridging the divide between externalism and internalism, insofar as it works into an agent's "subjective motivational set" the set of moral reasons.

[14] See Michael Ridge (2018) for statement of how the inescapability of agency helps explain the trumping power of moral duties.

[15] Note that even if what is required of agency ends up being tyrannical, there is an answer analogous to a dismissive answer to the demandingness objection: that's just what you have to do, even if you think it's demanding. That's what the standards of agency are, and you must abide them if you are to be an agent at all (which you must).

maximize impartial happiness is constitutive of agency. Then every agent will have conclusive reason to aim to maximize impartial happiness. But it is objectionably burdensome that a moral agent must forego her projects, friendships, and so on if it would bring about more impartial happiness if she did.

Let us now see how a constitutivist could attempt to disarm this objection by taking one of the above two horns.

1.4. The first horn: Internalism

One might think it would be simple for the constitutivist to leave sufficient space for friendship. I noted this tension depends on what exactly morality demands, or what exactly is constitutive of agency. So, if the constitutivist takes the first horn and deploys the internalist strategy, she can hold that the content of morality is responsive to friendship and other values. And in that case, the good agent can also be a good friend. Morality always wins in cases of conflict (since morality is conclusive), and yet agents still have the latitude to be friends.

I am skeptical of this solution. First, note that the constitutivist would have to just find that morality is sensitive to friendship. She could not amend morality to be so sensitive. This is because whatever agency requires cannot be made responsive to certain values, or to anything. We don't create agency, and we cannot change its constitutive features; unlike basketballs and other artefacts, agency is just given to us. It is the job of the constitutivist to analyze agency and discover its constitutive parts. If she discovers that agency is in fact sensitive to the demands of friendship, then I agree that would be sufficient to meet my charge. Agency would be such as to leave space for a good agent to also be a good friend.

However, given the variety of events that we recognize as actions, and given the plausibility of very minimalistic accounts of action (like Donald Davidson's causal story of action), it seems more likely that such a demanding conclusion would give us reason to be skeptical of the initial account of action with which that constitutivist began.

But my second reason for skepticism is that we have no reason to believe that what is constitutive of agency would leave sufficient space for friendship. I justified concern with friendship because it is an essential ingredient in a good *human* life. But conceptually, agency is not unique to humans. It is compatible with manifestation in nonhuman rational life forms, some of whom may be solitary. Consider that God would be maximally rational but would have no need of friends (as a self-sufficient, perfect being, God would need no support) or other human goods. There is then no reason to think that agency should deliver on distinctly human goods.[16] Contrast this with the project of Aristotelian virtue ethics, which is founded on what is necessary for a good human life. Because of this, we could expect that Aristotelian virtue ethics would leave space for living a good human life in the demands of virtue (or morality). Agency does not make the same promise. It would be surprising if agency could secure that human agents can live good human lives or be good friends.

Let me defend this a bit more by evaluating an example of an internalist constitutivist account. To this end, let us see whether Smith's capacities account of constitutivism can leave sufficient space for friendship. I will first give the basics of his account before explaining why he is an internalist. Then I will argue that Smith cannot accommodate friendship within his constitutive account of reasons. This, I claim, is illustrative of the promise of internalist constitutivist accounts in general.

First, I briefly present Smith's constitutivism.[17] Smith defines an agent as a being whose function is to realize its desires, which he claims it can do well or poorly. In order to fulfill this

[16] And on the flip side, note that while humans are agents, they are other things, too – they are biological beings, social beings, and so on – and it is conceivable that the norms issuing from these distinct kinds could conflict. So, just because Xing would make a human a good agent does not guarantee it would make her a good biological being or social being. See Smith (2015, 193) for a related point.

[17] My discussion of Smith's constitutivism has benefited greatly from Bukoski's critical assessment in Bukoski (2016).

function, a being must possess and exercise two capacities: the *knowledge-acquisition* capacity, through which one comes to know about the world so as to know the means to one's end, and the *desire-realization* capacity, through which one comes to act, or take the means to one's end, so as to realize one's desires.[18] So, any agent possesses and exercises these capacities to some extent (as these capacities are constitutive of agency at all); an *ideal* agent possesses and exercises these capacities to a maximal degree. This ideal agent is fully informed and her desires are both maximally coherent and unified.

What does the psychology of the ideal agent have to do with us? Following Smith's dispositional theory of reasons, any agent has reason to desire X in virtue of the fact that her ideal counterpart would desire X for her. Accordingly, if there are any desires that all ideal agents have *qua* ideal, then all non-ideal agents (us) will have reason to have those same desires. Smith argues [1] that there are such desires, justified by their inducing coherence into these ideal agents and [2] that these desires are recognizably moral. Furthermore, since these desires are constitutive of ideal agents (since an ideal agent is maximally coherent and these desires are coherence-inducing), they are *dominant* desires: they trump any non-constitutive, idiosyncratic desires, thus eliminating any potential for conflict. (And thus achieving coherence in the psychology of the agent.) Given the substantive claim, [2], it follows that all agents have reason to act morally insofar as final desires lead to action, according to the standard causal story of action.

[18] Theses capacities fall out of Smith's understanding of the causal story of action, according to which an action is caused by a final desire – something an agent desires for its own sake – and a belief about how to realize this desire in the circumstances.

The dominant final desires that all agents have are the noninterference and promotion of the knowledge-acquisition and desire-realization capacities of ourselves and others.[19] The plausibility of this claim [1] is upstream from the argument of this paper, so let me describe its justification only briefly. Smith notes that the full exercise of the knowledge-acquisition and desire-realization capacities can conflict, as when an agent has a desire to believe that *p* irrespective of whether *p* is true. Because a coherent agent is a better agent, the ideal agent will not suffer such conflict; rather, she has dominant final desires that induce coherence in her. Building intrinsic desires into the agent to not interfere with and to promote her capacities will ensure that there is no conflict. Her more particular or idiosyncratic desires are constrained by these formal desires, so that no ideal agent will form a particular desire to, e.g., believe that *p*.[20] It is, therefore, internal to her capacities that she will have no desires that would conflict with the full exercise of those capacities. Towards advancing [2], Smith furthermore claims that there is symmetry between not interfering with and promoting one's own capacities and not interfering with and promoting the capacities of others.[21]

[19] More precisely, these dominant final desires that all ideal agents must have are: a desire not to interfere with the current exercise of their capacities, a desire not to interfere with the future exercise of their capacities, a desire to secure that they possess and exercise their capacities in the future, and all of these same desires with respect to all other agents, given that the limitation of the content of these final desires to oneself is "ad hoc." See Smith (2013), 22-25.

[20] In reconstructing Smith's argument in this way, I depart from Bukoski's treatment of Smith in Bukoski (2016). Bukoski alleges that Smith privileges the knowledge-acquisition capacity over the desire-realization capacity, but since Smith introduces dominant final desires not to interfere with the exercise of *both* capacities, I opt for a different treatment. Additionally, since Smith believes that a reason to desire something is just a reason to believe that that thing is desirable, it seems that it is in fact the knowledge-acquisition capacity that is curtailed by the introduction of these dominant final desires. (See Smith [2015].)

[21] Smith uses two justifications for this symmetry. First, he claims (with Derek Parfit) that one stands in the same relation to one's future self as one does to other agents, so any reasons one has with respect to the former, one has to the latter. (Find this justification in Smith [2013] and find an argument against this in Bukoski [2016].) Second, he claims that there is an interdependency of our capacities and the capacities of others, such that to protect *our* capacities, we must also protect *others'* capacities (and vice versa). (Find this justification in Smith [2015]. Note that Bukoski's argument against the "Symmetry Thesis" does not seem to address this argument.)

So, we all have reason to desire to help and not interfere with the knowledge-acquisition and desire-realization capacities of all agents (since our ideal counterparts would desire this for us). Smith claims that, as a substantive matter, these reasons match up with our intuitions about what moral reasons we have. We intuitively think that we are morally obligated to keep our promises, and we can explain this obligation in terms of Smith's constitutivism: to break a promise would be to interfere with the promisee's exercise of at least her knowledge-acquisition capacity, since she expected us to keep the promise. We also have reason to promote educational opportunities for all, since such opportunities promote an agent's exercise of her knowledge-acquisition capacities. And so on. Smith claims these and other such reasons are recognizably moral.

Let me now explain how Smith is an internalist. I noted that Smith argues that there are certain dominant final desires that *all* ideal agents have. These desires are final insofar as they are desired for their own sake, and dominant insofar as "their realization is a condition of the realization of any other desires that an ideal agent might happen to have."[22] In cases of conflict with other desires, then, these take precedent. This is because Smith's dominant final desires are basic insofar as their realization makes possible the realization of any other desires. They do not permit conflict with other particular desires (such as the desire to believe *p*) and acting on these particular desires over the constitutive desires would be self-defeating. Because these dominant final desires give rise to moral reasons, it follows that moral reasons have exclusionary force. They permit no genuine conflict with other reasons (such as those of friendship). Smith is therefore an internalist; any accommodation for other values must be found within morality itself.

[22] Smith (2013), 19.

Now I will argue that Smith's constitutivism fails to accommodate friendship. Here is why. We have conclusive reason not to interfere with the exercise of anyone's two capacities and conclusive reason to promote everyone's two capacities. These trump any more particular or idiosyncratic reasons we have (such as reason to be there for our friend). This will mean that in cases in which you have led someone to believe something or given them reason to think you will help them realize their desires, you must act to realize those beliefs. As Smith puts it, "Whenever such reasonable expectations are created, but go unmet, the account provided thus suggests that there is a wrong in the offing of the most fundamental kind. Lying, manipulating, cheating, being disloyal, betraying, and free-riding are all examples of subsidiary wrongs of this nature."[23] As Michael Bukoski points out, this seems awfully demanding. Bukoski uses an example of going to a coffee shop every day. Now that the staff knows he has come in daily for a suitably long stretch of days, they expect that he will come in today. So, if he doesn't go today, then he will have frustrated the exercise of their knowledge-acquisition capacities, and therefore committed a wrong of the most fundamental kind.[24] This is unintuitive.

Let's also reconsider Sam. The Council appointed the Fellowship to destroy the Ring. So, the Council and the departed members of the Fellowship are depending on the rest of the Fellowship to attempt to complete the quest. It seems that by forfeiting the quest to defend Frodo, Sam frustrates the exercise of multiple agents' knowledge-acquisition capacity. Furthermore, Sauron's oppressive regime would greatly curtail the exercise of either of anyone's future capacities (except Sauron's). So, Sam would have to go on with the quest. As I noted at the outset, since this is an important reason of friendship, failure to permit Sam to turn back to

[23] Smith (2013), 27.

[24] Bukoski (2016). Presumably, by going when he doesn't want to, Bukoski would also frustrate the exercise of his present desire-realization capacity. Note that Smith's account is inconclusive with respect to how to settle such apparent conflicts. If it's a numbers game, though, then the staff win out.

defend Frodo is sufficient to demonstrate that Smith's constitutivism fails to leave sufficient space for friendship.

I have already indicated that I think this problem is not unique to Smith's account; it is unlikely that any internalist constitutivist can overcome the burdensomeness objection. For such an account to succeed, friendship would have to be built into what is constitutive of agency. But that seems unlikely for the following reason. Moral metaethical constitutivists begin with a conception of agency (or action) and then claim that morality can be derived from what is constitutive of agency (or action). As Paul Katsafanas notes, these accounts are most plausible when our conception of agency (or action) is thinnest and least controversial and then show that, nonetheless, we can derive some very substantive reasons from this weak account of agency (or action). But I have already explained why it is hard to see how being a good friend could be partly constitutive of action or agency. So, I think there is good reason to be skeptical of such a project. The first horn is not promising.

1.5. The second horn: Externalism

Now let us consider the merits of the second horn, the externalist strategy. Perhaps the most well-known externalist constitutivist is Christine M. Korsgaard. Korsgaard is sensitive to worries about moral tyranny and explicitly seeks to show that constitutivist moral obligations do not always trump obligations of friendship. She notes that our friendships may matter more to us than morality does, which is why personal relationships can generate "some particularly intractable conflicts with morality."[25]

My aim in this section is to evaluate the success of this project with a view to whether other externalist constitutivist accounts can overcome the burdensomeness objection. While part of the

[25] Korsgaard (1996), 128.

argument depends on Korsgaard's idiosyncratic view of the constitutive properties of agency, it is possible to abstract from this substance and reflect on the strategy's resources.

I now turn to Korsgaard's account. For Korsgaard, acting for reasons, which she equates to acting under the moral law, is constitutive of agency. Her argument for this claim is complex; I present its basics below.

1.5.1. Normativity

On Korsgaard's account, the source of normativity is reflective endorsement. Humans, as self-conscious beings, must act for reasons.[26] In order to act for a reason, one must decide whether the object of the impulse that confronts one is good. A given object is good if it can figure into a maxim that has the form of a law that one gives oneself.[27] So, a self-conscious agent can act only on maxims she gives herself that have the form of a law.[28]

Korsgaard claims that one can give oneself a maxim with the form of a law only when one is governed by a conception of one's identity. An identity is a description under which one values oneself, such as "parent," "student," or "friend." Each has a set of principles, or a point to it, by the lights of which some actions are compatible with the conception and some are not.[29] For

[26] According to Korsgaard, to be self-conscious is to have the capacity of attending to mental states and external objects. She also holds that self-conscious beings cannot abstain from choosing: if one figures one might escape the burden of choosing to act by going to sleep or sitting still, it remains the case that one *chooses* to go to sleep or sit still, and so fails to avoid that burden. We cannot opt out; we must act.

[27] Briefly, a maxim is an act-end proposition, such as "go to class in order to learn," where "go to class" comprises the act and "to learn" comprises the end, and the whole of which is an action. The maxim is good if it has the form of a law. See Korsgaard (1996), 107-108; Korsgaard (2009), 11-12.

[28] See Korsgaard (1996), 94-98 and 107-112 for this argument. See also John Skorupski (1998) for an iteration of Korsgaard's argument (esp. 344-345, and what follows for a critique of that argument).

[29] I grant for the sake of argument that on Korsgaard's account, agents have reason to endorse some practical identities rather than others. Some of Korsgaard's critics argue that her account cannot meet its own standards here. This is because an agent must act for reasons, but (they argue) there are no reasons to choose one contingent identity over another within her framework. Reasons come only from identities, so how do we adopt an identity in the first place? See Donald H. Regan (2002) and Samuel J. Kerstein (2001) for iterations of this argument. For a reply that Korsgaard's account does give us reason to pursue some identity over another – by claiming that our desires give us reasons when they don't conflict with the human identity and that we can respond to the value created by others in our communities – see Bukoski (2018).

instance, if you identify as a student, then you will have reason to read in order to better your knowledge. The impulse to study (for the betterment of your knowledge) can be endorsed given your identity. On the other hand, the impulse to cheat on a test threatens your identity as a student; that is not something a student does.[30]

Identities make it the case that we can give ourselves law because we are active in adopting our identities. We reflectively endorse the identity, which makes us the source of these principles' application to us, and thus they are maxims that we give ourselves. So, identities are a source of reasons for us. Korsgaard also claims that identities are the *only* source of reasons. However, it's unclear why we couldn't just reflectively endorse some isolated principle, severed from any identity, and derive reasons for action from that principle. I will grant this point for now as my concerns are downstream from here.

In sum, in order to act for a reason, one must be governed by a conception of one's identity. And as self-conscious beings, we must act for reasons. So, we must be governed by a conception of our identity.

1.5.2. Obligations

It is possible for a human to lose or abandon some conception of her identity, since all but one conception are contingent.[31] But, as we saw above, one cannot act for reasons if one lacks a conception of one's identity. So, because humans must act, it follows that one must not lose all conceptions of one's identity. Korsgaard also claims that humans have presumptive reason to maintain all of their identities. She claims that humans must live with integrity, which amounts

[30] See Korsgaard (1996), 100-101 and 118-121; Korsgaard (2009), 20-21. Note that if one believes (like G.A. Cohen [1996]; see esp. 174-176) that one does not need to identify oneself with a principle in order to act, and that one might act on some singular order, that acting for the point of the role should still capture the reason-giving force of identities while permitting singular orders and principles.

[31] See Korsgaard (1996), 120.

to living up to one's own standards. In that case, one should also maintain each conception of one's identity unless one has reason to abandon it.[32]

This leads to Korsgaard's conception of obligation. Korsgaard states that "An obligation always takes the form of a reaction against a threat of a loss of identity."[33] You experience an impulse and check it against your identity. If acting on that impulse is incompatible with and threatens your identity, then you have an obligation not to act on that impulse. In the example above, you are obligated not to cheat because it threatens the loss of your identity as a student. It bears repeating that what makes something an obligation is that we must have identities, since, on Korsgaard's account, we need them to act. The root of obligation's deontic force, then, is our need for reasons for action.

1.5.3. Moral obligations

Moral obligations have the same form as any other obligations, but they are necessary and inescapable rather than contingent. This is because the identity from which they issue – the human identity – is necessary. What follows is Korsgaard's defense of this claim, which comes by way of a transcendental argument for the possibility of rational action.

The first step is that rational action – acting for any reason at all – exists; therefore, it is possible. Next, any reason to act is derived from the human (agential) identity. That is, an agent must conceive of herself as a human being in order to have a reason to act at all.[34] This is

[32] See Korsgaard (1996), 101-102 and 229 for discussion of integrity and its being a necessary condition for action. See also Korsgaard (2009), 18-19 and 179. Briefly, integrity requires that you unify yourself in light of all the conceptions of your self so that you are a coherent whole (a unity). One cannot act unless one is (precisely that) *one*. Furthermore, the categorical imperative best unifies a self.

[33] Korsgaard (1996), 102.

[34] Of note is that this is a logical commitment that follows from the claims (i) that humans must act for reasons and (ii) that reasons come from conceptions of one's identity. This need not be transparent to an agent in order for her to act. For criticisms of Korsgaard's argument on this point, see Kerstein (2001). But note that my reading of Korsgaard's argument diverges from Kerstein's in virtue of the logical commitment claim; Kerstein argues against a reading of Korsgaard that requires the agent to be conscious of this entailment. If I am right, then Korsgaard's account is not susceptible to that particular strand of Kerstein's argument.

because it is *qua* human that you need to act (since it belongs to the human to act), and because the possibility of action depends on having an identity. So, it follows that one has reason to act at all only if one values oneself as a human being, or treats one's humanity as a practical, normative identity.[35] A more particular conclusion follows from this: if one accepts that there are reasons to act at all – if one acknowledges that one has reason to do anything – then one is committed to valuing humanity. Furthermore, every human must act since that's what it is to be human. So, Korsgaard claims, every human must value humanity.[36] This means that the human identity is necessary; it and its obligations are "inescapable and pervasive."[37]

The next step is to claim that the constitutive norms of the human identity just are moral norms.[38] And if they are, then those reasons and obligations of humanity, to which we are all committed, are moral reasons and obligations. So, all humans have moral reasons and moral obligations. I will grant this rather striking identity claim for the sake of argument, and instead focus on what it entails.

As was evident in the transcendental argument, there is a priority or basicness to the human identity: it's the condition for rational action at all. However, if humans identified only as humans and as nothing else, they would encounter the empty-self problem; they would have very

[35] Bukoski argues that Korsgaard's argument for the value of humanity is circular. See Bukoski (2018), esp. 218-221.

[36] This is actually too strong. Korsgaard does allow that humans can delve into complete normative skepticism by failing to value at all, in which case one does not value humanity. See Korsgaard's discussion of suicide for this caveat in Korsgaard (1996), 161-164. My argument does not address complete normative skeptics since it assumes the value of friendship.

[37] Korsgaard (1996), 122. As Korsgaard puts it by way of summary: "Since you are human you *must* take something to be normative, that is, some conception of practical identity must be normative for you. If you had no normative conception of your identity, you could have no reason for action, and because your consciousness is reflective, you could then not act at all. Since you cannot act without reasons and your humanity is the source of your reasons, you must value your own humanity if you are to act at all." (Korsgaard 1996, 123)

[38] I do not have the space to present it here but see Korsgaard's defense of this claim in Korsgaard (1996), 132-145. For criticisms of the argument, see R. Jay Wallace (2009) and Mark LeBar (2001). See also Korsgaard (1996), 116-118 for elaboration on why valuing humanity is a moral relation at all.

few reasons at all. So, Korsgaard advances the "communitarian claim," which requires that humans have some contingent practical identity to give their lives more determinate content. This is a second way in which the human identity is basic, since the reason that we need some contingent practical identity is that being human, or acting, requires it.[39]

There are a few notable upshots of this relation between the human identity and any contingent practical identity. First, the normativity or value of one's contingent practical identities is partly derived from the normativity or value of the human identity. The human identity makes these other identities necessary; we would not have reason to identify with some contingent practical role if it were not for the human identity.[40] Second, the particular reasons arising from the contingent practical identity get their normativity from that particular role. The reason that you should go visit your friend even though you don't feel like driving that far today is that that's what friends do. And if you find yourself doubting whether you should be a friend, you'll have to reflect on that identity and its principles (or point); the human identity tells you only that you need some contingent identity and that you should live up to the standards you set yourself. It doesn't say you need this particular identity, or these particular standards. One can abandon this identity and adopt another one by the lights of the human identity, and that's fine (so long as it is not pervasive). It is not a violation of one's own standards to change what they are. And third, the human identity exerts a governing role over one's contingent practical identities. Insofar as a part of the contingent practical identity's normativity comes from the human identity, it doesn't make sense to identify oneself in ways inconsistent with the value of

[39] Korsgaard also says, "part of the normative force of those reasons [which spring from our more contingent and local identities] springs from the value we place on ourselves as human beings who need such identities. In this way all value depends on the value of humanity; other forms of practical identity matter in part because humanity requires them." (Korsgaard 1996, 121)

[40] As Korsgaard puts elsewhere, these contingent practical identities "are independent sources of normativity, but morality backs and reinforces them." (Korsgaard 2009, 2, n. 2)

humanity. We are all logically committed to the human identity. As a matter of internal coherence, we cannot identify as both human and, e.g., mafioso.[41]

1.5.4. The conflict of obligations

Korsgaard allows that obligations can come into conflict, since our identities can demand divergent things of us.[42] Recall Sam's plight – he seems to have a moral obligation to go on with the quest and an obligation of friendship to turn back to defend Frodo. What may Sam do? Korsgaard endeavors to permit that one could act on the obligation of friendship in such cases; she claims that moral obligations do not always trump obligations from contingent practical identities, including friendship. Here's how she argues for that.

First, the friendship identity is not completely subsumed under the moral identity, as we saw in more general terms above. Every contingent practical identity is its own independent source of normativity since it is an object of reflective endorsement. Second, this means that the reasons and obligations of friendship have an independent force. Korsgaard then claims that there is "no obvious reason why your relationship to humanity at large should always matter more to you

[41] For worries about Korsgaard's claims to the contrary in her response to critics at the end of Korsgaard (1996), see fn. 42 below.

[42] For Korsgaard, the only sorts of conflicts we can have are conflicts *per accidens*, rather than *per se*, to borrow David O. Brink's terminology (see Brink [1994], 216, fn. 2). This is because Korsgaard rules out *per se* conflicts with her claim that any contingent practical identity one conceives oneself under must be fundamentally compatible with the human identity. So, an identity such as the mafioso identity, which contains principles like "be ready to coerce other humans in order to benefit the family," won't be able to generate a conflict of obligations because that principle is excluded – it is fundamentally incompatible with humanity, and so not a proper object of reflective endorsement. But the friendship identity, which might have a fundamental principle like "aid your friend when she needs it to benefit her," can lead to conflicts, as in this paper's example. The means to meet this principle conflict with the human identity; the principle itself does not. So, only the latter type of conflict, the *per accidens* conflict, is genuine for Korsgaard. (Although, see Korsgaard [1996], 251-258) for the claim that because it is reflective endorsement that makes something normative, the mafioso does in fact have reasons and obligations stemming from his mafioso identity. These could then potentially conflict with other obligations. I will ignore this complication, because for reasons that will become clear below, I do not think Korsgaard's account can permit this concession.)

than your relationship to some particular person."[43] So, Korsgaard concludes, moral obligations do not always trump obligations from more contingent practical identities.

This is desirable. Since Korsgaard is an externalist, she must have a mechanism to permit non-moral obligations to override moral ones if she is to disarm the burdensomeness objection. Korsgaard is an externalist since she both (i) allows moral obligations to conflict with non-moral ones and (ii) does not engage in the project of showing how the human identity is sensitive to the friendship identity, or to the philosopher identity, or whatever. It has its own content.[44] And the other identities do, too; even though they have to pass a test which requires they are not fundamentally incompatible with morality, that leaves the bulk of its content left to determine.[45] If moral obligations did trump obligations from contingent practical identities in important cases (such as Sam's), then the moral identity would swamp other forms of identity. So, it is good for Korsgaard's account to have this safeguard; it seems capable of leaving sufficient space for friendship in the life of a moral agent. It seems permissible for Sam to turn back.

One point of Korsgaard's account needs clarification, however. What could license an action that is in accordance with an obligation of friendship but flouts a moral obligation? In what sense is Sam's defending Frodo permissible if he thereby threatens his identity as a human?

In general terms, it seems most plausible that what makes it permissible to flout a moral obligation for a contingent practical obligation is that one maintains one's integrity in so acting. Recall that to live with integrity is to live by the standards one sets oneself. So, one maintains

[43] Korsgaard (1996), 128.

[44] Note that most of its content is negative – we mostly have moral reason not to act, rather than reasons to do something. That can still be quite oppressive, however, depending on how much it constricts our possible actions. Additionally, note that the reason in Sam's case – to keep his pact – is a reason to do something, and is recognizably moral.

[45] Korsgaard explicitly notes that one can be a good friend while scorning the rest of humanity. See Korsgaard (1996), 126-8.

one's integrity by flouting the moral obligation for the contingent practical one. But note that one would maintain one's integrity in the same way by not flouting the moral obligation, since it's just living up to the standards of one of one's conceptions and not another's. One can go either way, and either way the status of the act is the same. In either case, the agent must flout an obligation. And in either case, the agent must honor an identity. Honoring that identity is acting with integrity, so one acts with integrity (along one axis) whichever way one chooses.

Accordingly, when Sam turns back, he maintains his integrity because he upholds his friendship identity. He would also maintain his integrity if he continued the quest and therefore failed as a friend to Frodo. In that case, moral obligations do not always trump contingent practical obligations, and the contingent practical obligation does not trump the moral obligation, either. That strikes me as an acceptable result.

1.5.5. Moral obligations should always trump non-moral obligations when they conflict

In what follows, I argue that Korsgaard's attempt to leave sufficient space for friendship fails. It cannot be permissible to act according to the contingent practical obligation in times of conflict; such an act would fail to maintain the integrity of the agent.

To see this, let me first reproduce Korsgaard's argument in a nutshell: moral obligations do not always trump contingent practical obligations because [i] we must have contingent practical identities in order to act; [ii] integrity requires we live by our own standards, some of which are determined by our contingent practical identities; and [iii] contingent practical identities can issue unconditional obligations, just as morality can.

This conclusion is inconsistent with what Korsgaard says about the value of humanity. Recall the different ways in which the human identity is the most basic identity: it makes contingent practical identities necessary, is the condition for part of contingent practical identities'

normativity, and is the condition for action at all. Given this, and given that an obligation is a reaction to a threat of a loss of identity, how could it be possible for moral obligations to not always trump contingent practical obligations when the two conflict? If one loses one's human identity, one loses the ability to act at all. In what sense could one maintain one's integrity if one loses one's agency?

There is a dilemma here. On the one hand, Korsgaard may hold that the human identity *cannot* be lost, since it is inescapable. In this case, perhaps one could maintain one's integrity by flouting the moral reason.[46] But the cost is that there would be no moral *obligations*, since an obligation is definitionally a reaction to a threat of losing an identity. If one could never lose the moral identity, then there could be no threats to the identity, and thus no moral obligations. On the other hand, Korsgaard may retain the obligatoriness of moral obligations by permitting that the human identity *can* be lost. So, there must be some acts – such as murdering, lying, and promise-breaking – that threaten one's human identity. But the cost is that, because the moral identity is critically important – it is the basic condition for normativity – any threat to the moral identity should generate a *very* strong moral obligation.[47] Pending a new account of obligation, Korsgaard should take the second horn. Moral obligations are too important.

Now, given this finding, can Korsgaard say that it is permissible for you to violate the moral obligation rather than that of friendship? I think not; you could not maintain your integrity by acting at the expense of the moral identity, since the moral identity is a uniquely necessary ingredient for integrity. From the point of view of integrity, the friendship identity is merely a

[46] It may also be worth noting that Kant apparently thinks it is impossible to lose one's identity or character as a human; see Thomas E. Hill (1980), esp. 86-87, 91.

[47] This is not as strong as it seems: note that one can lie and *know* this doesn't threaten one's identity – such as to the murderer at the door – which doesn't qualify as an obligation since it does not threaten one's reasons for action. But some lies would, perhaps such as lying about cheating on a spouse.

particular contingent practical identity. It is true that we must maintain at least one contingent practical identity; that was the condition of the communitarian thesis.[48] But Sam does not value himself only as an agent and as Frodo's friend; he also values himself as a gardener, etc.[49] Then: all non-moral identities are contingent, so why not abandon this particular identity, and allow himself to be governed by all the rest? There is nothing about this particular identity that is agentially essential, on Korsgaard's account. Furthermore, integrity does not require that you never shed an identity; it requires just that when you are governed by an identity, you should stick to it. But you're free to abandon the identity if you have reason to do so. And it looks like Sam has strong reason to do so.

The moral identity, by contrast, is the condition for this particular contingent practical identity, and any other one, to have value at all. While particular identities have an independent source of normativity, it remains the case that the human identity is necessary for the normativity of any other practical identity and that it is only those who are governed by the human identity who can act for reasons.[50] Since humans must act for reasons, it follows that the human identity should take precedence over all other identities.[51]

Korsgaard almost admits as much when she claims that the human identity, because of its fundamentality, exerts a governing role over the other identities. However, Korsgaard limits this governing role to excluding identities that fundamentally conflict with morality from being ones

[48] As Korsgaard says, "What is not contingent is that you must be governed by *some* conception of your practical identity." (Korsgaard 1996, 120)

[49] I take for granted that Hobbits are sufficiently like humans such that Sam's moral identity would be the same as ours.

[50] Though see Enoch (2006) for the classic shmagecy argument. He argues that Korsgaard's account of action here is implausibly strong and doesn't give us any (normative) reason to be agents, anyway.

[51] Furthermore, the person who is stuck between deciding whether to act on a reason of friendship or of morality is clearly not a complete practical normative skeptic, since she evidently accepts the force of her friendship identity. So, this person is a being to whom the hypothetical "if you believe you have reason to act, you are committed to valuing humanity" gains traction, since the antecedent is true of her.

we can coherently adopt. But why think the governing role of morality should stop there? If it really is the condition of all value, of action at all, should it not also govern what we should do when a moral obligation conflicts with a contingent practical obligation? Korsgaard does not explain why she takes it that the governing role of morality operates only at the level of adopting identities. But given what grants morality a governing role in the first place – its being a necessary condition for action at all – it should also operate at the level of conflicts of obligations. And if that's the case, then moral obligations do always trump contingent practical obligations. Sam must go on with the quest and Korsgaard's account cannot leave sufficient space for friendship. The structure that Korsgaard employed to secure this space is not compatible with her account.

One might object that this is too hasty. After all, Sam might be lucky insofar as he had another contingent practical identity to spare. But what if, in a similar case, the only descriptions under which a person values herself are "human being" and "X's friend"? In that case, there is extra support for the obligation of friendship since humans must be governed by *some* contingent practical identity. This is her only one, and if she flouts the obligation, she may lose it. So, what should she do? If these are the circumstances, the objector continues, then it does not look so easy to say that the moral obligation should trump the contingent practical obligation. (It looks very difficult to say what one should do at all.) And, if we accept that the moral obligation does not trump in this instance, the objector concludes, then Korsgaard can defend the claim that moral obligations do not always trump contingent practical obligations. The cases would be few, but it remains a logical possibility.

I think this is right. By the lights of the communitarian thesis, you must have some contingent practical identity to have reason to act. You must also have the human identity to act.

In either case, you will lose a condition for your having reasons to act. So, it seems true that the moral obligation does not trump the friendship obligation in this case. One is truly in dire straits here. Strictly speaking, then, Korsgaard is entitled to the claim that moral obligations do not *always* trump contingent practical obligations on her account. But recall the reason we wanted this conclusion: to leave sufficient space for friendship in the life of the moral agent. Korsgaard's accounting for the small (if extant) range of cases in which an agent has only one contingent practical identity and finds herself at a crossroads with morality does not amount to leaving sufficient space for friendship. After all, one shouldn't have to be only a friend and a human, and nothing else, in order to be secure in being a good friend. Friendship isn't the only necessary component of a good life. Meaningful work and hobbies plausibly enable living a good life, as well. I should be able to be a philosopher, a baker, and a human, and still be able to be a good friend if I so choose. So, we can concede this to Korsgaard while retaining the conclusion that her account of morality cannot leave sufficient space for friendship in meaningful life.

So far, I have argued that Korsgaard's account cannot overcome the burdensomeness objection. I now argue that this inability generalizes to externalist constitutivists more broadly. To overcome the burdensomeness objection, externalists would have to be able to permit reasons of friendship to override moral reasons in important cases, but this is not a live option for constitutivists.

The first step of this generalization is to recall that the reason Korsgaard cannot leave sufficient space for friendship is that morality is grounded in what is constitutive of agency. In order to be an agent at all, one must act morally. That is a constitutive requirement. Next, recall that constitutivism claims that what is constitutive of something gives normative standards for it; it determines whether something is that sort of thing at all, and what is a good or bad instance of

it. So, if acting morally is constitutive of being an agent, then one who fails to act morally is either not an agent or a bad agent. Next, recall that externalists acknowledge that genuine conflict between moral and non-moral reasons is possible. Morality is not (sufficiently, at least) internally sensitive to other values like friendship. Finally, recall that friendship requires that one has certain reasons to act with respect to one's friend. So, in an instance in which a moral reason conflicts with a reason of friendship, because acting morally is constitutive of agency, one cannot coherently act on the reason of friendship. Doing so undermines the conditions of agency. This renders a human either a non-agent or, at minimum, a bad agent. This is unacceptable; one should neither lose their agential status nor become a bad agent for acting on reasons of friendship in important cases (such as in Sam's case).

Note that this finding does not depend on Korsgaard's substantive claims about what is constitutive of agency. What matters is just that what is constitutive of agency is to act morally. And that is definitionally a feature that all (moral metaethical) constitutivists share.

But one might think my argument does not generalize in this way, for the following reason. Korsgaard's argument relies upon identities, but other constitutivist accounts may deal in just principles or aims. Agency isn't an identity we have to adopt, but a source of principles or aims by which we must be guided. Furthermore, a constitutivist account need not hold that agents must adopt friendship identities in order to have reasons for action with respect to their friends. They can just accept some principle of friendship, no identity strings attached. But the argument of this paper addresses only constitutivist views that ground reasons in identities. So, the objection goes, constitutivist accounts in general are not subject to these arguments.

My argument does not hinge on reasons issuing only from identities. Furthermore, I don't think Korsgaard must be committed to using the concept of identities for agents to have reasons

to act. Recall the discussion concerning why identities meet our need for giving ourselves maxims that have the form of a law. In that section, I granted Korsgaard's point for the sake of argument, but we should reconsider it now. Korsgaard claims that identities are the only source of reasons. But it's unclear why we couldn't reflectively endorse some isolated principle, severed from any identity, and derive reasons for action from that principle. That principle could still issue maxims that have the form of a law. In that case, humans could derive reasons and thus meet their requirement to act without having adopted an identity. They could endorse some set of principles without thinking those principles are part of a conception of their identity. Even if it is necessary that humans value themselves under some description(s), it would not follow from this that all reasons must stem from identities. And for all that Korsgaard has said, there is nothing to rule out this alternate source of reasons.

Now, if this is the case, consider what part of my argument would be different. Rather than being a reaction to a threat of a loss of identity, an obligation might issue when a possible action is incompatible with a principle. Rather than speaking of the friendship identity obligating Sam to turn back, his principle to be there for Frodo obligates him to turn back. And the moral principle not to break one's pacts obligates him to go on. What's different here? In either case, the moral obligation arises from the conditions of agency, and the friendship obligation arises from norms derivative of agency. Your identity as an agent might not be threatened, but what makes you an agent is. So, in either case – of identities or principles – one should act on the moral obligation. The crux is that it's unclear how agency could give reason to undermine itself.

1.6. Conclusion

I have argued that constitutivism is unlikely to be able to leave sufficient space for friendship in the life of the good agent. This is troubling insofar as friendship is one of the most meaningful

parts of a good human life. While I have used friendship as my test case, I believe this finding extends to any similarly structured value (perhaps, for example, undertaking rewarding projects and hobbies or meaningful work). An account of morality or normativity that does not leave sufficient space for such values is unreasonably burdensome for individuals. While I argue that the plight for externalist constitutivists is insurmountable, it is possible for an internalist constitutivist to overcome the objection. But such an account has yet to be provided, and there is good reason to be skeptical one could be.

2

A critique of Scanlon's contractualism

2.1. Introduction

Many moral theorists believe that if there is moral reason to act in some given circumstances, that reason is conclusive. Morality enjoys a privileged place of importance and priority among our reasons for action. T.M. Scanlon, in *What We Owe to Each Other*, aims to defend (i) this privileged status of his contractualist moral reasons and (ii) the compatibility of these conclusive moral reasons with the pursuit of other values.[52] I will call this latter claim *Compatibility*. Delivering on *Compatibility* is important: it is Scanlon's path to overcoming what I have called in the Introduction the burdensomeness objection. If adherence to moral reasons precludes realizing other important, non-moral values, then agents will have good reason to question why they should act morally at all.

Scanlon's argument for *Compatibility* involves showing that his contractualist moral reasons are internally responsive to other things we have reason to value.[53] Because morality, for Scanlon, is determined by what agents seeking to live on justifiable terms with others could reasonably reject, morality just is an arbiter of agents' interests. It follows that if agents have reasonable interest in, e.g., friendship, then it is plausible that sufficient space for friendship can be carved within morality. If these conclusive moral reasons are responsive to other values, then the fact that they have a unique priority among our reasons for action does not threaten to swamp an agent's life.

[52] See especially: "we can address the problem of priority in two ways: first, by arguing that morality does in fact leave room for other values; and, second, by arguing that these values themselves, properly understood, give way to morality's demands when conflicts arise." (Scanlon 1998, 161)

[53] As is evident by Scanlon's first means of addressing the "problem of priority" in fn. 1.

I will argue that Scanlon is unsuccessful in securing *Compatibility*. He is unable to show that moral reasons are sufficiently responsive to what we have good reason to value.[54] I present two objections to Scanlon's argument for *Compatibility*. My weaker objection claims that while Scanlon purports to capture our ordinary intuitions concerning the moral permissions generated by friendship, he offers no explanation for such lines drawn by conventional morality. I call this the explanatoriness objection. In this case, while contractualism is compatible with the pursuit of non-moral values, it is unclear why or how. My stronger objection claims that it is not clear that friendship ever generates permissions to act in ways that would otherwise be impermissible. Put another way, it is unclear that there is any scenario in which a potential principle that recognizes a stranger's interests rather than a friend's could be reasonably rejected on account of the value of friendship. But that is precisely what friendship, allegedly, makes possible. I call this the structural objection. In this case, Scanlon fails to accommodate *Compatibility*.

I mentioned in the Introduction that the non-moral value I focus on is friendship. This is particularly pertinent in Scanlon's case: he explicitly defends the compatibility of friendship with his version of morality and intends the treatment of friendship to generalize to other non-moral values.[55] As we have noted, this attention is not ill-placed. Friendship is a particularly important

[54] See Elizabeth Ashford (2003) for an argument that Scanlon's contractualism is just as demanding as utilitarianism. Ashford argues to this conclusion in part with the claim that the strongest ground of reasonable rejection is well-being. I do not think Scanlon is committed to such a priority of well-being (nor do I think it is plausible that there would be such a priority), however, and do not use this premise in my argument.

[55] Scanlon writes:

> A complete response to the problem of priority would involve extending this account of friendship to cover all the other values that might conflict with the demands of the morality of right and wrong. I obviously cannot give such a complete account here. All I can do is to indicate briefly how the extension would go. In all these cases, just as in that of friendship, there is a three-part strategy. The first is to argue that insofar as these are things that people have reason to pursue and to value, these reasons will be among those that can make it reasonable to reject some principles. Therefore there will be pressure within the morality of right and wrong to make room for these values. But there will of course be limits, and the second part of the strategy (which divides into two subparts) is to argue that when these limits are reached we have good reason to give priority to the demands of right and wrong. (Scanlon 1998, 166)

value, given its necessary role in a meaningful human life. Additionally, we commonly recognize ourselves to have obligations with respect to our friends; to fail to act as friendship requires is no small matter. So, if contractualist moral reasons conflict with reasons of friendship, it is not at all obvious that agents should act morally. Friendship therefore serves as an exemplary value for which morality should make space. Thus, my argument is that the contractualist is not guaranteed to be able to be a good friend; these values are not necessarily compatible. Any value that is structurally similar suffers the same fate.

2.2. Scanlon's view

I begin by presenting Scanlon's account of friendship. His first line of defense for *Compatibility* is to introduce a version of friendship that is built upon a moral relationship. If friendship is already defined around moral reasons, then reasons of friendship will not recommend that you do something immoral.[56] And, on the other side, there will not be a case in which acting on the moral reason is incompatible with acting on some reason of friendship. Therefore, such a version of friendship is guaranteed to be compatible with morality.

What exactly does this version of friendship look like? Scanlon thinks that it is one that most of us ("us" being human agents in the late 20th century) intuitively recognize. He uses an example to demonstrate our familiarity with it. Consider a friend who would steal a kidney from some stranger for you because you need one. Scanlon thinks that you will be unnerved by this, and that you do not think that there is a reason of friendship for your friend to steal a kidney for

I do not address Scanlon's claim that when the limits of compatibility between morality and other values are reached, that there is good reason to give priority to morality. This is because I believe the plausibility of this priority will depend upon where the limits are placed. And I think that the limit that Scanlon ends up being able to protect – for okay friendship but not good friendship – is unsatisfactory; I do not believe it is clear we have good reason to give priority to morality over good friendship. I am skeptical of the claim that the value of living justifiably with respect to others is greater than the value of friendship.

[56] Scanlon notes that a person who is a 'friend' but who does not respect the moral claims of one's 'friend' and others is not in fact a friend. (See Scanlon [1998], 164.)

you. It is unnerving, Scanlon claims, "because of what it implies about [your] 'friend's' view of your right to your own body parts: he wouldn't steal them, but that is only because he happens to like you."[57] There is something objectionable going on here: your friend is willing to violate another human's bodily rights because he likes you. He recognizes the moral claims only of friends; if you are not his friend, he does not see you as a person with moral standing. This is why you might be unnerved, then: it is merely contingent that your friend isn't stealing *your* kidney – luckily for you, he likes you.[58] But if he didn't, then your kidney would be less secure.

What this is intended to demonstrate is that we expect our friends to respect the moral claims of ourselves and others. The kidney case, that is, generalizes to all moral claims. As Scanlon explains it, if "the conception of friendship that we understand and have reason to value involves recognizing the moral claims of friends *qua* persons, hence the moral claims of nonfriends as well, then no sacrifice of friendship is involved when I refuse to violate the rights of strangers in order to help my friend."[59] Limits are placed on reasons of friendship by what is morally required; the good friend would never violate the rights of others in order to help a friend, because friendship itself does not require it. As Scanlon writes: "Compatibility with the demands of interpersonal morality *is built into the value of friendship itself*."[60] As such, there would be no reason of friendship to do something immoral.[61]

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[57] Scanlon (1998), 165.

[58] It is interesting to note that contingency is, nevertheless, a central part of friendship on any plausible account of it. That I happened to meet you and we happened to like each other rather than one of the other billions of humans on this planet is certainly contingent. But Scanlon thinks you would not be unnerved in noting that it is merely contingent that your friend comes to visit you only because he likes you. This form of contingency does not threaten your status as a person with moral standing, come the end of the relationship.

[59] Scanlon (1998), 165.

[60] Scanlon (1998), 165. (my emphasis)

[61] One might question whether it is morality itself that constrains friendship, or if it is simply internal to friendship that one doesn't do things that happen to be immoral. For instance, one might think that the reason you cannot steal a kidney for your friend is because your friend wants an assurance that were your friendship to dissolve, you still wouldn't steal her kidney. In this case, it isn't morality that constrains friendship, but the very same

This will help Scanlon a bit; it ensures that reasons of friendship and reasons of morality will not conflict. But that alone is insufficient to make good on *Compatibility*. Paring back the claims of friendship so that they are compatible with morality might ensure that the moral agent and "friend" is not conflicted, but this does not amount to rendering compatible morality and the intrinsically valuable form of friendship that is necessary for a good life. It could, instead, protect only a "watered-down" version of friendship.[62] Consider that the form of friendship left could be one in which it is permissible to act on reasons of friendship only when one, say, chooses to volunteer at a charity in a time slot with their friend rather than with a stranger. This would be excessively restrictive of the scope of reasons of friendship. But, so far as we can currently see, this may be the only form of friendship Scanlon can render compatible with his morality. So, we'll want an assurance that morality is sensitive to friendship just as friendship is sensitive to morality. Friendship, that is, should be capable of generating permissions to act in an otherwise impermissible manner. This would allow us to recognize and protect the intrinsic goods of friendship. And, ideally, that would guarantee the compatibility of good friendship and morality.

Let's now look at Scanlon's contractualist account of morality to assess whether he makes morality sensitive to friendship. Scanlon's contractualism holds that an act is wrong if and only if its performance under the circumstances would be forbidden by a set of principles for the general regulation of behavior that no one suitably motivated could reasonably reject.[63] Reasonable

considerations that produce moral principles. I do not think this is what Scanlon has in mind, but I also do not think it is problematic for my argument if it is. In that case, rather than saying that morality constrains friendship, it is impartial concerns that constrain friendship (since one considers how one would like to be treated as a stranger). So, whatever is impartially mandated will still constrain the friendship, and that is extensionally equivalent to what morality demands.

[62] Scanlon writes: "I have argued, in addition, that this is not a watered-down version of friendship in which the claims of friends have been scaled back simply to meet the demands of strangers." (Scanlon 1998, 165) I have not yet presented Scanlon's argument that this version of friendship is not watered-down, of course.

[63] Scanlon (1998), 153. Note that principles are general conclusions about the status of various kinds of reasons for action for Scanlon. So, principles can rule out acting from certain reasons, require that one weight certain reasons higher or lower than others, etc. (See Scanlon [1998], 199.)

rejection itself is comparative.[64] What this means is that an individual might be burdened by the acceptance of p_1 and the rejection of p_2, but if another individual bears a greater burden by the acceptance of p_2 and the rejection of p_1, and there are no alternate principles, then p_2 can be reasonably rejected and p_1 cannot. Note also that only generic reasons can generate reasonable rejections. Generic reasons are based on information about what individuals have reason to want in virtue of their situation; no very particular information about individual subjects can factor into reasonable rejection. This serves the dual purposes of limiting the demandingness of acting morally – one does not have to calculate effects on each individual, given their particular preferences – and picking out what is morally salient – what people have reason to want, not what they possibly irrationally or indefensibly do in fact want.[65]

What qualifies as a burden, or what can be a ground for reasonable rejection? Scanlon thinks that grounds for reasonable rejection (non-exhaustively) include loss of well-being, unfairness, inadequate recognition of one's entitlement to something, and impossibility of recognizing other values one has good reason to recognize.[66] In justifying the inclusion of the last sort of potential objection, Scanlon explains that "insofar as these are things that people have reason to pursue and to value, these reasons will be among those that can make it reasonable to reject some

[64] Consider, for instance, Scanlon's life preserver case. There, if you and I are both in the same position with respect to the life preserver (namely, drowning, and requiring it for survival), then on one vector (well-being) we have the same claim to the life preserver. And it seems like a pretty strong claim, since it concerns life or death. However, Scanlon notes that "it may still make a difference to the force of their objections that one of them now has the jacket (perhaps he has looked hard to find it) and is therefore not now at risk." (Scanlon 1998, 196) So, because the individual who has looked hard to find the life preserver has a claim of entitlement to it, the principle that permitted the other to forcibly take the life preserver could be reasonably rejected. Instead, something like the principle that requires agents to respect the entitlements of others even in dire situations seems to win out.

[65] This latter point is also connected to Scanlon's use of 'reasonable' rather than 'rational' – see Scanlon (1998), 191-197.

[66] Scanlon (1998), 218-219. He thinks that moral judgment must be used to determine what other grounds there are or might be. He also thinks moral judgment must be used to assess the gravity of individuals' burdens, to determine which burden is the greatest (see 217-218). Note also that an agent's well-being is a different concept than the good life. Scanlon notes that well-being and choiceworthiness with respect to how one's life goes are different. Well-being seems more immediately tied to the agent's perception of her life, whereas the choiceworthiness of a life is related to the value of the life. (See Scanlon [1998], 126-133)

principles. Therefore, there will be pressure within the morality of right and wrong to make room for these values."[67] This is where *Compatibility* comes in. Scanlon thinks, correctly, that people have good reason to want to recognize the value of friendship.[68] So, if a potential principle made it impossible to recognize the value of friendship, it could be reasonably rejected (depending on what the alternate principles and their costs are).[69,70] This would help to guarantee the compatibility of friendship (which, recall, is our representative non-moral value) and morality.

It should be clear that for Scanlon, morality is something like an adjudicator of agents' interests. Morality defines how we can act justifiably with respect to one another, and that is determined by weighing our interests and seeing which are sufficiently important to protect. Friendship is one such interest that will ideally be protected in the moral sphere.

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[67] Scanlon (1998), 166.

[68] "[A]s agents we typically have reason to want to give special attention to our own projects, friends, and family, and thus have reason to object to principles that would constrain us in ways that would make these concerns impossible." (Scanlon 1998, 204)

[69] Note that friendship will constrain morality only when it gives the comparatively stronger objection. (Hence the qualifier.) We have to consider how important of a value friendship is compared with other values or objections (well-being, truth-telling etc.).

[70] Here, one might object that friendship enters in as an objection to potential moral principles in a different place than I have indicated. Rather than thinking that friendship generates objections because some principle would make realizing the value of friendship impossible, one might think that friendship generates objections because a potential moral principle that curtailed the realization of friendship would have a bad effect on agents' well-beings. So, friendship actually comes in as an objection under the heading of "well-being," not failure to realize some value.

I agree that it is plausible that an agent's well-being is affected by whether she has friends and by her interactions with them, if she does. An agent is better off both when she has good friends and she is able to interact with them. So, a potential moral principle that would stymie these activities would indeed have a bad effect on the agent's well-being.

However, I do not believe that friendship is properly understood as an aspect of well-being as far as agents' objections to potential moral principles go. It is its own intrinsic value. It would be strange if an agent objected to some principle that would preclude her from having any friendships by claiming that it would adversely affect her well-being. That gets the nature of the objection wrong. It isn't really that her well-being is adversely affected (although that's true, it seems egocentric), and it's also not that her friend's well-being is adversely affected (also true, but not to the point, and somewhat paternalistic). The objection is that she cannot be or have a friend, cannot partake in the value that is friendship. Furthermore, the first-person standpoint is typically transparent about the values that comprise one's well-being. An agent identifies what aspect of her well-being is affected, rather than appealing to the blanket term "well-being," in objecting to some potential principle. As Scanlon puts it, "From an individual's own point of view, the boundaries of well-being are blurred, because many of the things that contribute to it are valued primarily for other reasons." (Scanlon 1998, 129) For these reasons, I believe that the correct way to parse the basis of these objections is by citing the value of friendship itself.

Let me note that accidental, actual conformity with some value is insufficient for protecting the benefits of that value, and therefore would be insufficient to defend *Compatibility*. Consider Scanlon's treatment of privacy to see why this is so. Scanlon notes that in order for us to have the benefits of privacy, it cannot merely be the case that people happen to not go through our stuff and listen in on our phone calls. Rather, we need an assurance that people will not do this. Only then can I plan around, e.g., making a call concerning sensitive information. One way of securing this assurance is achieved by the general acceptance of a principle that protects privacy.[71] So, we should expect a similar protection for friendship within the principles of contractualist morality if friendship is to be compatible with morality. Only then can I plan around, e.g., being there for my friend when she needs me.

Now let's consider a case to test *Compatibility*: call the case *Hospital*. Say that your friend is in the hospital in extreme need. Her greatest wish is not to die alone, with no friends or family nearby, but her family cannot make it in time. It seems you have reason to visit your friend in the hospital. But the hospital admits only family to see your friend in her current dire condition, and the staff asks you whether you are family. It seems you have a reason of honesty (or something of the sort) to admit that you are not family. But this would jeopardize your reason of friendship. What could Scanlon's contractualism say about this case?

On the one hand, Scanlon thinks that, absent special justification, we may not intentionally mislead others – there is reason to reject an alternative principle that permitted others to intentionally mislead us.[72] *Hospital* seems to fall under this heading, as you would intentionally lead the hospital staff to believe you are family when you are not. However, we might think that

[71] See Scanlon (1998), 203.

[72] Scanlon's principle is stated as follows: "One may not, in the absence of special justification, act with the intention of leading someone to form a false belief about some matter, or with the aim of confirming a false belief he or she already holds." (Scanlon 1998, 318)

your circumstances qualify as a special justification to intentionally mislead.[73] The hospital's reasons for restricting visitation of certain patients only to family are plausibly weaker than meeting your friend's greatest wish. If so, it seems plausible that the reason of friendship will prevail here, figuring in as a special justification for intentionally misleading others.

This is good for Scanlon. In the important cases, it seems likely that these reasons of friendship generate new permissions. So, it seems that morality and friendship are in fact compatible, and that Scanlon can defend *Compatibility*.

2.3. Analysis of Scanlon's view

2.3.1. The explanatoriness objection

However, there is reason to be skeptical of Scanlon's ability to accommodate (and explain) the breadth of cases we want. To see this, consider a different case: call it *Stranger Aid*. Abby and Bane are each poised to suffer some pain in the immediate future. Abby will suffer the destruction of one of her kidneys; Bane will suffer the lesser harm of a broken leg. Abby and Bane are both strangers. You can prevent the horrible accident only of one of them, and either intervention would come at little cost to yourself. Is it permissible for you to intervene on Bane's behalf rather than Abby's?

[73] Scanlon says the following about the principle of not lying in particular:

> The main generic reasons that bear on questions of lying and telling the truth are these. From the point of view of recipients, the main reasons arise from our need for information that other people can supply and, more specifically, our need to be able to rely on what other people tell us. Potential providers of information, on the other hand, have reasons arising from such concerns as preserving their own and others' personal privacy, reserving valuable information for their own exclusive use, protecting or enhancing their own reputation and that of others, protecting other people's feelings, and remaining true to their values and commitments by not aiding projects that they disagree with, disapprove of, or are in conflict with. (Scanlon 1998, 317-318)

Scanlon's Rescue Principle is operational here.[74] The Rescue Principle demands that an agent who can prevent something very bad from happening at little or moderate cost to herself do so. Abby's succumbing to an accident that would destroy one of her kidneys qualifies as something very bad, and it would come at little cost for you to intervene on her behalf. Bane's potential harm is less bad than Abby's, and that is morally salient here. If you can prevent only one of their horrible accidents, mustn't you intervene to prevent the worse accident? Scanlon (plausibly) thinks so.[75] So, if both Abby and Bane are strangers, and Abby faces more dire prospects than Bane, she could reasonably reject a principle that did not require you to rescue her, on account of her worse scenario. So, you owe Abby aid under the Rescue Principle.

Now let's introduce a new case: call it *Friend Aid*. *Friend Aid* changes one feature of *Stranger Aid*: rather than Bane being at risk of breaking his leg, your friend Bruce is. All the other features of these cases are the same. Abby stands to lose one of her kidneys and remains a stranger to you, and you can save only one person. So, now the question is whether the fact that Bruce is your friend makes a difference to what you ought to do. Are you morally permitted to save Bruce rather than Abby, despite her worse scenario?

Scanlon will almost certainly want to say that you could aid Bruce rather than Abby in *Friend Aid*. Consider the Rescue Principle again. You are required to prevent something very bad from happening to someone when it would impose a slight or moderate sacrifice. But it looks like the introduction of your friend changes another feature of the case: it would require a greater than moderate sacrifice from you to save Abby, since you would have to eschew a reason

[74] Scanlon's Rescue Principle is stated as follows: "If you are presented with a situation in which you can prevent something very bad from happening, or alleviate someone's dire plight, by making only a slight (or even moderate) sacrifice, then it would be wrong not to do so." (Scanlon 1998, 224)

[75] When considering whether there is a general priority for the worst off, Scanlon claims that someone's being relevantly worse off to what the principle is considering and in a way that the rescuing agent could alleviate makes for a stronger objection. See Scanlon (1998), 227-228.

of friendship and allow your friend to break his leg. It is one of the quintessential reasons of friendship to be able to prefer your friends in situations like this – to be able to aid them over strangers, plausibly even if the stranger is in more need.[76] So, it is plausible that you can (and should) save Bruce instead of Abby.[77] For these reasons, let's accept that your objection to the principle that required you to save the stranger (Abby) instead of your friend (Bruce) would take precedence over Abby's objection to being left to suffer greater misfortune under the principle that permitted you to aid Bruce.

But why is this the case? Why does *Friend Aid* generate a permission to aid Bruce instead of Abby, while in *Stranger Aid* you must aid Abby? There is surprising asymmetry between the verdict in *Friend Aid* and that in the bodily rights case (call it *Kidney*). Recall Scanlon's treatment of *Kidney*, in which your friend would steal a kidney, or violate another's bodily rights, for you. Scanlon claimed that friendship would not give you a reason to take the kidney because friendship would never require you to do something that violated the rights of others. So, in *Kidney*, friendship does not generate a permission to act in a way that would otherwise be impermissible. But in *Friend Aid* – in which your friend's survival is not on the line – a reason of friendship does generate a permission to act in a way that would otherwise be impermissible. Why does friendship generate new permissions in *Friend Aid*, but not in *Kidney?*

The reason for this asymmetry is not immediately evident. Why does the objection "I would be unable to prevent my friend's pain" qualify as a reasonable rejection to the principle that would require you to prevent the destruction of a stranger's kidney, but the objection "I would be

[76] Of course you should be able to prefer your friend when all things are equal – as in Bernard Williams' famous case in which your spouse and a stranger are drowning, and you should be permitted (or even obligated) to save your spouse over the stranger. See Williams (1981), esp. 213-215.

[77] Although, note that if Ashford (2003) is right and well-being always qualifies as the strongest kind of burden, it would not be permissible to aid Bruce instead of Abby. This would be just one of the ways in which contractualism is demanding on Ashford's reading.

unable to prevent my friend's death" fail to qualify as a reasonable rejection to the principle that would forbid you from taking a stranger's kidney? We will want an account of why reasons of friendship count as the right sort of reason in *Friend Aid* but not in *Kidney*. Scanlon will not have given us a satisfying account of *Compatibility* if the reason why morality and friendship are compatible is simply that we think it makes sense in the former case but not the latter. This reports our intuitions, but does not explain them. So, let's consider some potential explanations of this asymmetrical treatment of reasons of friendship between the two cases.

For a first possibility, one could say that there is a salient difference between causing harm and withholding aid. In *Kidney*, you are required not to cause harm; you are required not to take a person's kidney. In *Friend Aid*, you are permitted only to withhold aid; you are permitted to aid Bruce rather than Abby despite the fact that in other circumstances you would be required to help her due to her worse predicament. The suggestion is that reasons of friendship can never give us permissions to cause harm but can give us permissions to withhold aid. So, one could say on Scanlon's behalf, the principled distinction for when reasons of friendship can generate permissions in our contractualist calculus is only when we would not directly cause harm to a stranger.[78] That would explain why you cannot steal a kidney for your friend but can help Bruce rather than Abby. Stealing a kidney would cause harm to the stranger whose kidney you've taken, but helping Bruce rather than Abby doesn't cause her any harm – you're just withholding aid.

But this is not right. This distinction doesn't adequately capture the cases we want. Consider a new case: call it *Alligator*. In *Alligator*, you can either save Chris from excruciating death by pulling him out of the closing jaws of an alligator or wave to your friend Dolly across the lagoon

[78] See, for instance, Fiona Woollard (2015).

(she'll see you only if you wave right now). Surely you must save Chris; neither you nor Dolly could reasonably reject the principle that required you to save the stranger from impending death on the grounds that you would be unable to act on a reason of friendship. But Chris certainly could reasonably reject the principle that permitted you to act on a reason of friendship instead of saving a stranger from impending death. So, you must act to save Chris at the cost of greeting your friend Dolly.

However, *Alligator* is the same sort of case as *Friend Aid*, if not a bit ramped up – what is at issue in both is only withholding aid. In both cases, you either provide aid to a stranger or you act on a reason of friendship. But in *Alligator*, unlike in *Friend Aid*, friendship does not generate a permission to do what is otherwise impermissible. So, it is not the case that friendship can generate permissions whenever only withholding aid is at issue. We have a new asymmetry, and understanding when friendship can generate permissions to withhold aid seems to bottom out in a prior understanding of the costs at issue. The distinction between causing harm and withholding aid is insufficient to explain our asymmetries.

One might push back and claim there is a relevant difference between *Alligator* and *Friend Aid*: in the latter, there is also impartial reason to save Bruce. You have both an impartial reason and a partial reason of friendship to aid Bruce. The impartial reason alone is insufficient to have you save Bruce, but in conjunction with the reason of friendship, you do have sufficient reason to save him. On the other hand, there is no impartial reason in *Alligator* that would favor waving to Dolly; there is merely a partial reason. So, this might help explain the difference between the two cases.

However, if we amend the case to give you impartial reason to interact with Dolly – say she called out to you first, and we have impartial reason to respond to those who address us – it

remains the case that this impartial reason combined with the partial reason to greet a friend are insufficient to give you reason to greet her (given the circumstances). So, this still seems to bottom out in prior understanding of the costs at issue.

One might point out that I provided a counterexample only to the withholding aid bit, and so think that there is still something informative the distinction gives us: it may still be true that reasons of friendship cannot generate permissions to cause harm where it would otherwise be impermissible. But there's a plausible counterexample to this as well. Consider a new case: call it *Gouty Toes*. While walking, I must either step on a stranger's gouty toes or my friend's gouty toes (I can't decelerate in time to avoid everyone's toes). Surely I'm permitted to step on the stranger's toes rather than my friend's. But that causes the stranger harm that it would otherwise have been impermissible to inflict. The "causing harm" and "withholding aid" distinction faces counterexamples on both sides. It is insufficient to explain our asymmetries.

A second option for Scanlon would be to posit a ranking between the different grounds of reasonable rejection. So, maybe security of bodily integrity comes first, then some other interests, then friendship, then relief from horrific suffering, and so on. If there is such a ranking, then we can appeal to it when we are deciding which objection is the strongest with respect to a certain set of potential moral principles, and we would have a principled way of doing so.[79]

This, however, would not work since the ranking could not be rigid: friendship comes before relief from horrific suffering in *Friend Aid*, but after it in *Alligator*. We would have to appeal to something further to explain when the ranking shifts or when there are special exceptions. But it isn't clear what that would be, and that's what we're looking for. So, this doesn't seem like a promising explanation of our asymmetries.

[79] For instance, as I have noted, Ashford (2003) argues there is such a ranking and that well-being comes first.

I do not have the space to assess all the available options, but I have canvassed what I take to be the two most plausible ones and found them lacking. It seems that what the contractualist relies on are just our intuitions about each particular case. There does not appear to be anything more principled or explanatory going on. Scanlon does frequently note that it is up to our moral judgment to, e.g., decide how to apply principles in particular cases, determine whether something counts as a special exception, what are other burdens that the acceptance or rejection of principles could impose on individuals, and so on. While I agree that it is fair to say it is up to agents' moral judgment to decide on the application of principles in everyday contexts, it seems rather quietest and empty to appeal to this within the structure of the theory. If this is correct, then Scanlon faces a serious problem: the way his account is supposed to guarantee space for friendship is mysterious. Perhaps Scanlon can defend *Compatibility*, but we do not have a satisfying account for why.

2.3.2. The structural objection

It is, however, unclear that friendship can generate permissions to act in ways that would otherwise be impermissible. That is, it is unclear that Scanlon can justify that it would be permissible for you to lie to the hospital staff in *Hospital*, or that it would be permissible for you to aid Bruce rather than Abby in *Friend Aid*. Recall that Scanlon insists that the version of friendship he seeks to protect is one that is built on the demands of morality. But if it presupposes what morality demands, then there's something strange in thinking that friendship could give you basis for objection to a potential moral principle. The good friend wouldn't expect you to steal a kidney for her when she needs one, since friendship is incompatible with such immoral acts. So, if he is a good friend, would Bruce want you to save him instead of Abby, if he is also (in virtue of being a good friend) a moral agent? It's not clear why he should, or how

he should. There is a structural difficulty in thinking through how Scanlon can permit the value of friendship – or any value that already accepts the claims of morality – to shape morality at all.[80]

Let me elaborate on this. Scanlon is concerned to protect only a morally constrained version of friendship. As we saw in *Kidney*, which is intended to generalize, the good friend does not have reasons of friendship to do anything immoral. For this version of friendship to generate an objection to any putative moral principle, it would have to have some content that could be curtailed by such a principle. But friendship is structured around the demands of morality. Scanlon explicitly noted that the value of friendship has the demands of interpersonal morality built into it. So, how could a potential moral principle constrain the content of friendship if friendship already accepts whatever moral principles there are? It seems that it could not.

This is problematic for contractualism. Scanlon introduced the possibility of friendship constraining morality to show the compatibility of friendship and morality. But if he cannot license friendship to provide an objection to any potential principle, then this compatibility is not secured: friendship cannot generate a new permission unless it can generate a sufficiently strong objection to a possible principle.

One might object that I have shortchanged what sort of content friendship can have, and thus how it could provide an objection to a potential moral principle. Friendship is not simply a moral relationship, even if Scanlon is right that friendship is built on moral demands. There are some goods of friendship, external to morality, that could figure in as bases for reasonable rejection. For instance, friendship requires that you further your friend's interests in certain ways, that you

[80] Note that Scanlon seems to suggest that all impersonal values are like this. His primary examples are friendship and science. See Scanlon (1998), 167 for the discussion of science.

be there to aid them when they require it, and so on. But you don't owe these things to strangers; they are unique goods of friendship.[81] So, wouldn't a friend be able to object to some principle that made these things impossible? If so, then friendship could influence the principles of morality.

I think it is correct that there are non-moral goods of friendship – that there is more content to friendship than just morality – and that this could be true of Scanlon's morally-informed friendship. But this fact is insufficient to guarantee that the value of friendship can serve as a basis for reasonable rejection to some potential moral principle. This is because whatever other content there is to friendship, it is sufficiently abstract such that it can be rendered compatible with almost anything that morality requires. So, even though this other content of friendship could potentially provide an objection to a moral principle, it will not; morality comes first and defines how exactly we understand these other goods of friendship.

To see that this determining relation exists between morality and the other goods of friendship, consider the non-moral requirement of friendship to promote your friend's interests. Clearly, promoting your friend's interests is limited in Scanlon's moral version of friendship – you can pursue only her morally sanctioned interests.[82] After all, as we saw in *Kidney*, you cannot further your friend's interest in life by stealing a kidney for her.[83] While living is a real interest of your friend's; and while it is true that you, as her friend, have reason to promote her interests; Scanlon does not think you have a reason of friendship to steal a kidney for her even

[81] Note that on this conception, you can be friends with your family.

[82] Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett (2000) see this as reason to think that the morally-informed version of friendship isn't very characteristic of commonplace good friendships.

[83] There are certainly more moderate cases. You couldn't imitate your friend's former boss to help her land her dream job, for instance, though some people do attempt to do this for their friends.

though having a kidney is necessary to secure her interest in living. Morality forbids this, and so it is not part of friendship.

But there are still some interests of your friend's that you can act to realize. You can, for instance, donate to the causes that are dearest to her, or help her move to a new neighborhood (but only if she has bought the new property and not stolen it). Importantly, the only interests of your friend's that you can act on are the ones that are not morally forbidden. This sort of moral determination plausibly extends to any other non-moral requirement of friendship. These requirements of friendship are sufficiently abstract that they can be constrained in this way – that helps explain how so many different forms of friendship are familiar to us, and yet nonetheless are classified as friendship. So, it is clear that for Scanlon, the goods of friendship are already morally tinged. It follows that even though there is non-moral content to friendship, it does not generate objections to any possible moral principles, much less generate new permissions.

As an example, let's again consider the requirement of friendship that you pursue your friend's interests. Could a friend object to the principle that requires she steal no kidneys on the basis that this makes it impossible to pursue her friend's interests? No, she couldn't. There are still many other ways in which she could pursue her friend's interests (she can donate to her friend's favored charity, send out emails requesting kidney donations, etc.). Her objection that it is impossible to pursue her friend's interest is false. It is still quite possible. In sum, the abstractness or multiple realizability of the requirements of friendship makes it the case that they cannot offer any genuine objection to a potential moral principle. You can always do something else – something that is morally permissible – to meet your friendship duties.

Let's see how this finding bears on *Friend Aid*. I said above that Scanlon could probably permit you to save Bruce rather than Abby. But can he? Consider the Rescue Principle, which

requires you to prevent great harm to another when it comes at little or moderate cost to yourself. Does it in fact come at greater than moderate cost to you to save Abby rather than Bruce, given that you can further Bruce's interests in ways other than just sparing him a broken leg? After all, you can save Abby's kidney, then drive him to the hospital, take him to physical therapy, bring him food, etc. Acting on any of these reasons is still acting on a reason of friendship; you still further Bruce's interests. So, saving Abby rather than Bruce would not prevent you from acting on a reason of friendship, and it would not make the realization of the value of friendship impossible. Wouldn't you have to save Abby then? According to Scanlon's Rescue Principle, I suspect you would.

This presents a problem for securing *Compatibility.* For morality to be compatible with friendship, it should be sensitive to friendship. But we see that it is not – even in important cases, friendship cannot generate permissions to do what is otherwise impermissible.

Now, one might push back on my claim that because the goods of friendship are multiply realizable and there might always be something else you can do, friendship cannot generate new permissions. After all, those other actions may be unsatisfactory. Driving Bruce to the hospital, taking him to physical therapy, and so on, are certainly ways of being Bruce's friend. However, they are poor replacements for preventing Bruce's leg from breaking in the first place. If all the other options are unsatisfactory, then wouldn't friendship generate a permission not to save Abby in *Friend Aid*, on the grounds that you couldn't be a sufficiently good friend? Isn't that a greater than moderate cost?

Well, what would your objection to the Rescue Principle *qua* good friend be? I will argue that whatever objection you could pose is comparatively weak and that there is no obvious reason why it would amount to a reasonable rejection in the face of other burdens. While good

friendship might be capable of posing an objection to a possible principle, then, it is unlikely to generate any new permissions. Furthermore, because accidental, actual conformity with the value of friendship is insufficient for giving us the benefits of friendship, as we saw in the case of privacy, this inability to generate new permissions shows that being a good friend is not compatible with morality.

To show this, first consider that a comparatively strong objection to a potential principle would be that it would make the realization of a value impossible. Scanlon explicitly uses this language of impossibility when demonstrating that morality is sensitive to non-moral values in his argument for *Compatibility*.[84] He claims that we can be sure the demands of morality are sensitive to non-moral values because principles can be reasonably rejected if they left *no room* for or made *impossible* acting on these values. There is, therefore, reason to think this strong form of objection is the only sort of objection Scanlon thinks non-moral values like friendship could issue to potential moral principles. It is perhaps telling to consider Scanlon's example for showing how morality is sensitive to non-moral values: he claims that a principle requiring strict neutrality between friends and strangers could be reasonably rejected because it makes acting on the value of friendship impossible.[85] That is a rather weak assurance for friendship; so far, all it assures us is that you can, e.g., volunteer with a friend rather than a stranger.

If impossibility of realizing a value is a necessary condition on posing an objection to a possible principle, then assurance for *good* friendship is all but lost. It is false, evidently, that you cannot act on a reason of friendship at all in *Friend Aid* if you must save Abby. Saving Abby

[84] See for instance: "Similarly, as agents we typically have reason to want to give special attention to our own projects, friends, and family, and thus have reason to object to principles that would constrain us in ways that would make these concerns impossible." (Scanlon 1998, 204) Also: "principles could reasonably be rejected on the ground that they left no room for valuing other things that are important in our lives." (Scanlon 1998, 160)

[85] See Scanlon (1998), 219.

does not make friendship impossible since it does not preclude driving Bruce to the hospital. And it would be quite a stretch to claim that acting on an unsatisfactory reason of friendship amounts to the impossibility of friendship. So, this objection doesn't work.

Let's assume that Scanlon can permit weaker objections than the impossibility of realizing a value. In that case, it seems your objection would be that you are unable to *best* act on your friend's interests. How else could we parse the objection that you cannot act on the satisfactory reason of friendship? The most natural objection would be that you cannot be a good friend to Bruce. But this intuitive way of capturing the objection reduces to being unable to best realize a value; that would be the generic reason at play.

Now, this is a comparatively weak objection to a principle. For instance, let's consider whether this is sufficient to generate a permission in *Friend Aid*. Does being unable to best act on your friend's interests amount to a greater than moderate sacrifice in the face of the destruction of Abby's kidney? If it were a greater than moderate sacrifice, then, according to Scanlon's contractualism, it would be justifiable to Abby (reasonable person that she is) that you withhold aid from her. But it is highly plausible that Abby would *not* find it justifiable that you forego protecting her kidney for the reason that doing so is incompatible with the best way for you to be a friend. It seems that Abby's well-being generates a stronger objection than having to settle for the best way of realizing a value. It also seems likely that this would generalize. The contending objections would have to be quite weak for the objection that you are unable to best realize a value to win out. In fact, it seems that being unable to best do something, in the face of compromise with the claims of others, would likely win out only if the other objections or burdens are of the same type – being unable to best realize a value.

So, because the objection that a potential moral principle makes you unable to best realize a value is comparatively weak, and because reasonable rejection is comparative, it follows that it is unlikely that this objection will win out in cases of conflict. But it would have to, in order to guarantee space for good friendship. So, Scanlon has not shown that morality is compatible with good friendship.

Let me note that morality is evidently compatible with *some* version of friendship. But this meager compatibility is insufficient to allay the worries that motivate accommodating *Compatibility* in the first place. It is better than nothing to drive Bruce to the hospital and, as I have said, this qualifies as acting on a reason of friendship. However, despite the multiple realizability of the goods of friendship, it is clear that some friendships are just okay friendships (ones that just meet the threshold of friendship) and some are good friendships (those with which I am concerned). While Scanlon can protect these "okay" friendships, since I could surely object to a principle that made realizing the value of friendship impossible, the same objection cannot be made if a principle makes *good* friendship impossible. This is because good friendship is not its own discrete value. Good friendships make for the best kinds of friendship, but they realize the same value as okay friendships. To say, then, that good friendship is made impossible is just to say that one cannot best realize a value.

I acknowledge that I am walking a fine line here. I earlier claimed that Scanlon cannot permit friendship to offer any permissions to what would otherwise be impermissible, but now show that Scanlon can permit *some* friendship permissions. But I have now claimed that these permissions are both rare and inadequate, since only okay friendship can generate satisfyingly strong objections. I maintain that okay friendships are insufficient for *Compatibility,* and that only good friendship will do. This is indeed a fine line, but I believe it is defensible. Okay

friends – whom I would intuitively describe as people with whom you are friendly, with whom you spend time and know quite well, but in whom you would not necessarily confide – are good. But they are not the good friends that we cherish, in whom we find unflagging support, and with whom we, in important ways, share life. I suggest at least part of the way we can differentiate these forms of friendship is based on which 'ranking' of reasons of friendship the friends act upon, and I have argued that only the lower ranking reasons are protected. Furthermore, no number of okay friendships is capable of providing the meaning found in the best of friendships.[86] Nonetheless, these friendships are still of the same kind as okay friendships. So, while okay friendship is compatible with morality, good friendship is not.[87]

Let me now connect this finding back with *Compatibility*. Scanlon's claim there is that the priority and importance of contractualist moral reasons are compatible with the pursuit of other values. There is a weak and unsatisfying sense in which this is true. For any value, it will be the case that we can lodge comparatively strong objections to potential principles that would make the realization of that value impossible. So, for any value, we are guaranteed room to realize its "okay" form. But surely this is an unsatisfying guarantee. Dabbling in values is far from delivering us the source of meaning and importance in our lives available through full-fledged

[86] Consider the question occasionally asked of school-aged children: "would you rather have many friends or one best friend?"

[87] Now one might insist that Scanlon has other means available to render good friendship and morality compatible: well-being. If I'm right that good friendship is necessary for living a good human life, then surely you could object to saving Abby rather than Bruce in *Friend Aid* because this would preclude you from realizing good friendship and therefore would impact your well-being. I take it, however, that it would be a hard sell to Abby to convince her that your living a good human life is more important than protecting her kidney. Part of the problem here for Scanlon's theory is that in order to act permissibly you must act justifiably from the vantage point of other (idealized) humans who have their own reasonable considerations. It strikes me as quite plausible that what the good friend does for her friend is not always justifiable to third parties or strangers, even if it is necessary for her own well-being. Additionally, I have already claimed the appeal to well-being is an inadequate defense of the value of friendship; friendship is its own intrinsic value. It is not good merely for its impact on our well-being. As such, the objection from well-being offers the wrong kind of reason.

commitment to such values.[88] So, in so far as we care about *Compatibility* because we want assurance that we can act morally without sacrificing our own lives, projects, commitments, and so on, we have not gotten sufficient proof that contractualism can deliver on *Compatibility*. Instead, we have good reason to be skeptical that it can.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Scanlon cannot guarantee *Compatibility* in his contractualist morality, using friendship as a test value. Either the requirements of good friendship place insufficient constraint on what can be morally demanded in Scanlon's contractualism (the structural objection) or they can, but there is no principled basis for when they can (the explanatoriness objection). Neither of these options is good for Scanlon. The first is obviously worse – it would leave Scanlon in the position of having to admit that good friendship is not necessarily possible for the moral agent. The second is bad as well, though – Scanlon can claim that good friendship and morality are compatible, but cannot explain why.

[88] For expressions of this concern or a concern closely related to this, see again Williams (1981), Wolf (1982), and Railton (1984).

3

A reconsideration of Aristotelian character friendship

3.1. Introduction

In his writings on ethics, Aristotle identifies three kinds of friendship based on what the object of love is in each. The kind that loves the character of the other is, he claims, perfect friendship. But there is a worry that this friendship is excessively moralized. First, Aristotle notes that this best kind of friendship is rare, which is in part because it is realized only between virtuous people.[89,90] In that sense, this rarity is due not only to the fact that most of any given person's friendships are not of the best kind – a highly plausible claim – but also that relatively few people are even capable of being in the best kind of friendship – a less plausible claim. So, one way character friendship may be over-moralized is that it would be had only amongst properly virtuous agents.

Another way in which Aristotelian character friendship might be over-moralized is if its defining feature is that the friends develop or improve in virtue, as many contemporary accounts of character friendship claim. This defining feature not only has implausible upshots for people who are already good (who may then be excluded from character friendship); it also makes character friendship objectionably instrumental. Furthermore, if the defining feature of character friendship is to improve *oneself* in virtue, then a host of reasons we intuitively think belong to friendship – like playing board games together – are at best orthogonal to friendship, and at

[89] I here leave intentionally ambiguous whether Aristotle intended that character friendship obtains between only two *fully* virtuous people, or whether it can obtain also between imperfectly virtuous people who value each other because of this fledgling virtue. I argue below that the latter is a better reading of Aristotle and more plausible in its own right. Within the current context, this would suggest that the rarity of character friendships is not due to people being ineligible to participate in it, but either to the reason I identify in the main text (it is just comparatively rare among one's friendships) or perhaps to individuals' failure to value the good of others as opposed to the incidental pleasure they take in others (which would be a psychological point).

[90] The other part is that one must come to know the other as good, which takes time.

worst contrived into a genuine reason of friendship only because playing board games teaches you not to e.g. cheat or take more than your fair share. Character friendship would be over-moralized in that the parts of friendship would have to be fitted to their moralized purpose – each friend improving herself. This is an objectionable and narrow account of what is supposed to be the best kind of friendship.

My aim in this paper is to defend a novel and contemporarily plausible account of Aristotelian character friendship. While excessive moralization is not the only issue, it unifies my consideration of the main problems that I think a plausible account of character friendship faces.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I present the basics of what Aristotle says about character friendship. I then consider, in turn, five problems raised by Aristotle's account and some solutions proposed by neo-Aristotelian commentators. I then evaluate the plausibility of such solutions both independently and as interpretations of Aristotle, and offer my own solutions where I find others lacking. What results is a novel account of neo-Aristotelian character friendship that holds water in contemporary analyses of friendship. Although I stick fairly closely to the text, since I do want my view to be Aristotelian in spirit, I do not aim primarily at exegesis of Aristotle's views. My primary aim is to develop a plausible contemporary account of friendship.

3.2. Aristotle's character friendship

Aristotle begins *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1 by noting that friendship in general is characterized by love, which – in the good case – involves wishing what is good for the other for the other's

own sake, or for herself.[91,92] There are three ways in which something can be loved: as good, as pleasant, or as useful. Two people can be friends, then, insofar as each loves the other in at least one of these ways and two further conditions are met: the love is reciprocal and mutually recognized. Aristotle also notes that all forms of friendship are based on "a certain resemblance."[93] In the case of friends who love each other as good, they resemble each other insofar as each is good.

Aristotle ranks the goodness of these kinds of friendship according to these ways of loving. A friendship based on love of another as pleasant or as useful is inferior because the love is grounded merely coincidentally in finding something pleasurable or useful in the other. It is *co*incidental since the object of love is happenstance in two ways: first, that the beloved is pleasurable in this way; second, that the lover finds this way of being pleasurable. So, if X loves Y for his quick wit, this love is coincidental both because it is incidental to Y that he is quick witted and incidental to X that she enjoys Y's quick wit. In what follows, I refer to the first aspect of coincidentality as "accidental" for ease of expression.

By contrast, friendship based on love of the other as good is the best kind of friendship because it is grounded in what is essential to the beloved. One loves the other for her own sake and for herself in this form of friendship, which is variously called "character," "complete,"

[91] *NE* 1159a33-34; 1155b16-1156a5.

[92] Lawrence S. Philpot II (2021) argues that, for Aristotle, love is not merely or principally an emotion. Love (*to philein*) is, rather, a state from which decisions to further one's friend's e.g. interests and well-being (things that contribute to or realize the friend's own good) for the friend's own sake issue, since this is what wishing well to the other for her own sake amounts to. This makes friendship a state of the same kind that virtue is, which helps to explain what Aristotle means when he says that friendship "is a virtue or implies virtue" (1155a5). I do not here weigh in on the issue of whether pleasure and utility friends wish well to another for the other's own sake, since that exceeds the scope of this paper. See, however, Cooper (1977a) and Whiting (2006) for arguments that pleasure and utility friends *do* wish each other well for their own sake, and Philpot (2021) for argument that they cannot.

[93] *NE* 1156b19-24.

"perfect," or "primary" friendship. (I will use the most standard contemporary term, "character.") Character friendship is the focus of this paper because it is the ideal kind of friendship.

Character friendship is between good people insofar as it is based on the friends loving each other as essentially good; each friend loves the other *because* the other is good and her particular goodness is essential to who she is. This entails that character friends are virtuous, since to be good is to be virtuous; character friends are just, charitable, courageous, and so on. As already noted, at least one of the ways in which these friends bear a certain resemblance to each other, then, is that they are similar in virtue. Aristotle also claims that character friendship is the most stable because character friends love each other as good, and to be good both realizes one's nature and is an enduring thing.[94] So, unlike for pleasure and utility friends, the shared love of character friends is not premised on anything coincidental. Nevertheless, Aristotle notes that character friends are both pleasant and useful to each other.[95]

Aristotle notes the character friend's relation to his friend seems to mirror the relation of the good person to himself. There are five attributes that Aristotle notes belong to these analogous relations: friends (i) wish well to the other for the other's own sake and act for the other's own sake; (ii) wish that the other exist and live for her own sake; (iii) live with each other; (iv) have the same tastes as each other; and (v) grieve and rejoice with each other.[96] Insofar as the other is related to oneself as one is to oneself (or X is related to Y as Y is related to Y), the friend is an "other" self. Furthermore, in addition to sharing tastes, pleasures, and pains, Aristotle claims that friends agree about what is to be done, which likely falls out of their being similarly virtuous.[97]

[94] *NE* 1156b6-7.
[95] *NE* 1156b13-24.
[96] *NE* 1166a2-9. Aristotle then proceeds to endorse the *endoxa* and explain how the good person relates to himself in the same ways. See also *NE* 1158a7-9.
[97] *NE* 1167b5-9.

As we have already said, character friendship is rare, and for at least two reasons.[98] First, virtuous people are rare, and loving the other's virtue is an (if not the) essential element of character friendship. Second, one has to know that the other's character is virtuous, and it takes time to learn this. One might bear goodwill (*eunoia*) towards a stranger whom she thinks is good, but it will take time and experience to sort out that she is in fact good and to come to love her goodness as she exemplifies it (that is, to form a friendship).[99]

Finally, a mark of character friendship is that the friends develop their virtuous characters.[100] Character friends grow in goodness in part by deliberating about their conceptions of the good with each other, but also by joint virtuous actions,[101] providing each other means to their virtuous ends,[102] helping each other retrace the path of virtue if one errs,[103] and – by omission – not providing opportunities for vicious action and even preventing one's friend from vicious action.[104]

3.3. Five interpretive problems

In this section, I present five interpretive problems and consider some contemporary solutions. I address each in turn by first briefly motivating the problem, then evaluating possible solutions, and finally either accepting the solution as adequate or suggesting my own.

On to the problems.

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[98] *NE* 1156b24-25.

[99] Aristotle notes that *eunoia* is not *philia*, insofar as *philia* involves "intensity and desire" which presumably develops over time and through shared activities (*NE* 1166b33). See Philpot (2021) for a helpful account of the distinctions among *philia*, *eunoia*, *philesis*, *antiphilesis*, and *to philein*.

[100] *NE* 1170a11-12.

[101] *NE* 1172a13.

[102] *NE* 1172a13.

[103] *NE* 1165b18-23.

[104] *NE* 1159b2-6.

3.3.1. Egoism

One might worry that, given Aristotle seems to claim that every act of the virtuous person is done for the sake of her own *eudaimonia,* friends are not actually acting for the sake of the other, but only for their own good.[105] I will grant that this rendering of the eudaimonist axiom is correct; note, however, that under a more permissive version of the axiom, one might act not only for *her own eudaimonia,* but also for that of another.[106] In that case, the problem would not arise.

It is important to note that this problem would not plague only friendship; it would make any virtuous action a quest for the realization of one's own good. So, we can address the problem with friendship by addressing the problem of the virtuous person's motive in acting virtuously in general.

Fortunately, things are not so dire as they might seem: As Julia Annas and Jennifer Whiting convincingly argue, the genuinely virtuous agent does not act from concern about how the act would contribute to her own *eudaimonia*, since that act would not be virtuous.[107] Rather, the virtuous agent is moved by the intrinsic goodness of the particular act, or the features of the act that make it an instance of virtuous conduct at all. Even though this act realizes or contributes to her *eudaimonia*, that it does cannot be her particular reason in acting.[108]

To see this, consider that one couldn't *courageously* dive into a body of water to save a drowning child in order to be courageous; that would not be courage but vainglory. What would make diving into the water to save the child courageous would be something like: suddenly

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[105] For the initial presentation of this worry, see Gregory Vlastos (1991).

[106] See Richard Kraut (1998), 92-96 for this view. See also Whiting (2002).

[107] See Annas (2007) and Whiting (2006).

[108] As Whiting says, "while it may be true that I am, in doing so, *realizing* my own *eudaimonia*, this is *not* the reason *why* I promote her activities, at least not if I am a genuine friend; I do so simply because I value her activities *for themselves*." (Whiting 2006, 302)

doing it (which immediacy in action would issue from one's state of character) or recognizing that the child needs help.[109] To act courageously – as with acting virtuously in any particular manner – one must (i) know that the act is courageous; (ii) choose to do what is courageous from what *makes* the act courageous rather than from some rote claim that it is in fact courageous; and (iii) from a stable character (or state).[110] This will restrict the range of reasons on which one may act to act virtuously.

If the above is correct, then we are prepared to see by analogy why the eudaimonist axiom is not problematic for friendship, either. When an agent acts for the sake of his friend, he is moved by the particular good of his friend. He does not proofread his friend's paper because he knows that will make him a good friend and therefore contribute to his being a good person; he proofreads his friend's paper because e.g. his friend asked him to and could use some help.

As already noted, this is not to deny that acting for one's friend contributes to one's own *eudaimonia*. Acting for your friend's sake *does* contribute to your own *eudaimonia*, and in at least two ways: (i) acting well by your friend is noble for you insofar as you would be exercising beneficence and (ii) contributing to your friend's good is good for you insofar as your friend's good is *part* of your good.[111] (ii) need be no more troubling a claim than to say that you care deeply about the good of your friend (if you are a good friend), and thus that her joy brings you joy and her sorrow brings you sorrow. It is your concern for her that extends your sphere of joys

[109] See *NE* III.7-8.

[110] *NE* 1105a31-33.

[111] See *NE* 1169a27-29, where Aristotle notes that by helping a friend via giving him money, one gains nobility: "They [good men] will throw away wealth too on condition that their friends will gain more; for while a man's friend gains wealth he himself achieves nobility; he is therefore assigning the greater good to himself." See Whiting (1996) for the argument that the comparative nature of "greater" is not interpersonally competitive, but int*ra*personally: that is the better thing you could have done for yourself.

and sorrows to respond to hers. In this way, you contribute to your good by benefiting your friend. This, however, is not the reason you do it.

I think this is a plausible and intuitive way of reconciling the eudaimonist axiom with Aristotle's claim that one acts out of genuine concern for one's friend.

3.3.2. The defining feature of character friendship

Our resolution to the egoism problem leads into the next problem. We saw above that in acting well, one responds to what makes something the good act it is. In the case of acting courageously, one acts on the reasons that make the act courageous. So, in acting as a good friend, one acts on the reasons that make the act one of friendship. This will be determined by its defining feature. So, then: what is the defining feature of character friendship?

There has been a recent trend that identifies the defining feature of character friendship as the virtuous development of one's character.[112] According to this view, character friendship is good because it (perhaps uniquely) molds individuals into virtuous people. In this case, its good is

[112] See Kristjan Kristjánsson (2020), Diana Hoyos-Valdés (2018), Dale Jacquette (2001), and Zena Hitz (2011). Kristjansson: "I will be arguing later that moral education (or, more narrowly construed, the cultivation of good character) is the *raison d'etre* of character friendship." (Kristjánsson 2020, 350) Hitz: "The collaborative nature of friendship also helps to show that Aristotle is not arguing that friends are intrinsic goods, but rather that they are a type of external good I will call 'integrated goods'. […] Their key feature is that they improve and augment what the good man does already rather than providing outside supplies or supplements" (Hitz 2011, 11) and "what does Aristotle mean when he says that friends are choiceworthy in themselves? He means that friends are choiceworthy in order to be fully and properly active, that they improve our virtuous activities rather than providing necessities for our bare survival or for external goods that are not properly integrated." (Hitz 2011, 22) And in answer to the question 'why friends are the greatest and most necessary external goods, without whom we would not choose to live,' Hoyos-Valdés cites that "character friendship plays a fundamental role in the development of the kind of theoretical and practical reason that make a flourishing life possible." (Hoyos-Valdés 2018, 70) Talbot Brewer (2005) makes much of the perhaps unique role character friendship plays in developing each party's virtue but denies that this is the point of the friendship.

importantly instrumental; it is good insofar as we are not perfect beings.[113] Were we perfect, it is unclear what reason we would have for character friendship.[114]

Let me begin my evaluation of this proposal by noting that it is ambiguous what "virtuous development of one's character" amounts to. Whose character is virtuously developed? If X and Y are friends, is the view that it is defining of character friendship that (i) X develop X's own virtue or (ii) X develop Y's virtue? In (i), it is defining of character friendship that, for each of X and Y, she makes *herself* a better person. And in (ii), it is defining of character friendship that, for each of X and Y, she makes *her friend* a better person.

Contemporary literature has not attended to this distinction, but it tends toward (i).[115] In this case, what makes a friendship a character friendship is that each of X and Y improves herself through their friendship. There is an attractive simplicity here: there is immediately intelligible reason for any agent to enter a friendship: to become a better person. With (ii), it isn't obvious why X should become friends with a person she doesn't know in order to benefit him.[116] But (i) suffers from worries about egoism. To claim that friendship aims at your own good is to distort

[113] Note that some of these authors – such as Kristjánsson (2020) and Hoyos-Valdés (2018) – assert that character friendship is (also?) intrinsically good despite accounting only or primarily for the role friendship plays in becoming virtuous. Mostly, they argue one could not realize the moral development of friendship if that were their intention. This is supposed to prove that friendship is intrinsically valuable. I find this unsatisfying for three reasons. First, I will argue below that it is too much to include one's own virtuous development as defining of friendship at all. Second, even if one's own development does not figure into the friends' motives, it remains the case that the friendship is defined in terms of each pole's moral development, which is problematic. Third, it is hard to see how this coheres with the solution to the egoism problem above (though these authors do not attempt to address this problem). If self-improvement is what makes character friendship good, what could account for the gap between this good-making feature and the motive of the agents participating in the activity?

[114] See Hitz (2011) for the strong version of this claim, that there would be *no* reason for friends were we perfect. The other authors are not so forthright, but also do not identify any reasons for friendship beyond development.

[115] Most directly: "No one has, to the best of my knowledge, written in any detail about how *one develops one's character* through interactions with close friends, let alone 'character friends' in the specific Aristotelian sense (barring some general suggestions in Tefler 1970-1971, and Hoyos-Valdés 2018)" (Kristjánsson 2020, 358, emphasis added). Brewer (2005) also seems to think that each friend develops herself in friendship, though as noted in fn. 112 above, he denies virtuous development is the defining feature of character friendship.

[116] If she joins the friendship with the aim of benefitting herself via her friend, then this is not relevantly different from (i). In (ii), her concern is with her friend's development rather than her own.

the value of friendship; it is phenomenologically inadequate. Friends who are concerned with their own improvement are disparaged as bad friends; they are not appreciated as members of the best kind of friendship.[117] Additionally, (i) seems committed to the view that friendship is primarily a springboard to virtue. When one becomes good, what reason does one have to remain in the friendship? It is unclear that there is any. This makes the good of friendship objectionably instrumental. So, we should reject (i).

Let's turn to (ii): the friends reciprocally develop *each other*'s virtue.[118] This understanding does not suffer from egoism worries, although it might suffer from a worry about paternalism.[119] If X is concerned with developing Y's virtue (and vice versa), there is a worry that each agent is attempting to foist external improvements on their friend. It is also somewhat puzzling how it could be that X is in need of development herself but nonetheless takes herself to be sufficiently qualified to develop Y (and vice versa). However, these worries look less troubling if the friends help each other develop collaboratively, through shared activity. Rather than thinking she stands in a qualified position to develop Y, X might think that they can grow together. This is more phenomenologically plausible. On the whole, I think it's clear that (ii) makes for a more attractive view than (i), though we might have questions about why the two become friends in the first place.

So much for independent plausibility. Now, assuming that virtuous development is the defining feature of character friendship – which I will grant for now – which of (i) or (ii) is more plausibly Aristotle's view? I turn now to the text.

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[117] In fact, as Philpot (2021), 99-100 points out, this seems characteristic of the *lower* friendships.

[118] Jacquette seems to have this in mind: "True or perfect friends of the highest type *encourage each other* in the enhancement and preservation of virtue, because the cultivation of virtue in one another is the basis and *purpose* of the highest type of friendship." (Jacquette 2001, 382, emphases added)

[119] See Sherman (1987) for a statement of worries about paternalism.

Aristotle notes that both the friendship and character of the friends improve through spending time together: "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" (*NE* 1172a13). Good friends also not only do not ask "base services" of their friends; they "(one may say) even prevent them; for it is characteristic of good men neither to go wrong themselves nor to let their friends do so" (*NE* 1159b4-6). Additionally, "[a] certain training in virtue arises also from the company of the good" (*NE* 1170a11-12). Finally, despite the fact that only what is good can be loved, Aristotle claims that if one's friend begins to stray from the path of virtue, instead of cutting off this wicked friend, "one should rather come to the assistance of their character or their property, inasmuch as this is better and more characteristic of friendship" (*NE* 1165b19-20).

I claim (ii) is more plausibly Aristotle's view. He speaks of "improving *each other*" and the shared companionship and activities of friends, which sounds much closer to X attending to Y than to herself. Additionally, recall from §2 Aristotle's statement that character friends wish well to each other for the *other*'s sake, or for *herself*. If I am a good friend, I care for *your* good. Insofar as virtue is good for you, I then have reason to develop your virtue. We see this emphasis above, where Aristotle mentions that good men do not let their friends go wrong and even assist their friends. So, I think (ii) is more plausible both independently and as an understanding of Aristotle.

Now that we have settled the ambiguity about virtuous development, I want to question why it should be the defining feature of character friendship. If what makes a friendship a character friendship is virtuous development, then once there is no space for virtuous development, it is unclear that there is space for character friendship. That is, on this view of friendship, there is no obvious reason for a maximally virtuous person to have character friends. But recall that

character friendship is the *ideal* form of friendship. This, then, is the trouble: the ideal person should be the prime candidate to engage in the ideal form of friendship, but if virtuous development is the defining feature of character friendship, it is unclear how this could be so.

Accordingly, I think we should reject this view, for two reasons. First, it is *reductive*: as I noted above, it entails that, ideally, we have no reason for friends at all. This would minimize the importance of friendship and fail to fit the phenomena, since even or especially for virtuous people, friends are the greatest external good. Additionally, there is a second sense in which it is reductive: it is unclear that this defining feature could accommodate the breadth of reasons of friendship we take ourselves to have. If the defining feature is virtuous development, it seems that my reasons of friendship are limited to that. So, if I have reason to play your favorite board game with you, this would be only because it provides e.g. an opportunity to practice not cheating and taking only your fair share. Second, it makes the good of character friendship *instrumental*: character friendship is appropriate where there is space to develop, and it is unclear what good it serves once one has reached perfect virtue. It is irrelevant that this is exceedingly rare (if possible at all). If character friendship is indeed perfect friendship, and its ideal form is among the perfectly virtuous, the defining feature of this friendship cannot be development of virtue.

So, let us see if Aristotle must be saddled with this reductive and instrumental conception of character friendship. First, recall the textual evidence above that virtuous development is a mark of character friendship. I granted there that it supports that virtuous development is the defining feature of character friendship but argue against this now. Note that in the first two quotes above, Aristotle is stating *endoxa* without necessarily endorsing them. He notes that friends are "thought" to become better by their activities, and that "one may say" that friends prevent base

actions. And Aristotle's claim that "[a] certain training in virtue arises also from the company of the good" (*NE* 1170a11-12) comes, strangely and significantly, at the end of an argument concerning the self-sufficient person enjoying the virtuous activity of her friend. The claim that this training in virtue "arises" from the company of the good is too weak to posit a claim about the defining feature of friendship. Furthermore, there is nothing specific about friendship here – it is generic to good people rather than good friends.

But second, the primary test for evaluating this defining feature of character friendship is in answer to the question of whether the self-sufficient person – the person of perfect virtue – needs or has reason to have friends. If so, the defining feature cannot be development. Some commentators seem to think the answer is "no," which would – for the above reasons – be bad news for Aristotle. Zena Hitz, for instance, explicitly notes that friendship is needed only because we are defective, and that the wiser and more independent we get, the less need we have for friends, which she claims is a good thing.[120] From Hitz's perspective, we can never actually attain self-sufficiency; but if we could, we would not have friends.

Others argue that the answer is "yes." John Cooper agrees with Hitz that the self-sufficient person needs friends only because humans are in a sense defective (compared to the gods) and friends can (perhaps uniquely) correct these defects.[121] But he also thinks that because these defects are part of what it is to be *human*, that they set the upper limit of what qualifies as self-

[120] I will flag that I am not convinced Hitz's argument goes through since it depends on attributing to Aristotle endorsement of the claim that "a friend, being another self, furnishes what a man cannot provide by his own effort" (*NE* 1169b6-7). But this claim is within the scope of "It is said" (1169b4). While Aristotle never explicitly denies or endorses this sentiment about friends filling gaps in our needs, and may in fact conclude that the self-sufficient man needs friends, the sense of "needs" isn't necessarily in terms of unfillable gaps. The sense in which the self-sufficient man would need friends is that they are necessary for sufficiently contemplating the good, which is intrinsically worthy. In this case, friends would be *part* of the good, not disposable ladders to it.

[121] See also Biss (2011).

sufficiency.[122] Analogously, self-sufficiency in nutrition for humans might be growing one's own food, rather than needing no food at all. Thus, the maximally self-sufficient *human*, unlike the gods, still needs friends.[123] This answer seems to resolve both worries.

Finally, some commentators answer with something like "a qualified yes." Whiting, for instance, notes that even though all of the supremely happy person's *needs* will be met, she still has *reason* to have friends insofar as she takes pleasure in them.[124] The friend is good, and the good person takes pleasure in the good. So, the self-sufficient person does not *need* friends, but she has good reason to have them anyway. This answer also seems to resolve both worries.

Let's turn to Aristotle's remarks in *NE* IX.9 to settle this issue. There, he seems to endorse the claim that the self-sufficient man should have friends in order to contemplate worthy actions.[125] Without going into too much detail, Aristotle claims that the maximally good agent is friends with another maximally good agent so that she can fully contemplate good action, since she is too close to her own good actions to appreciate them. The reason for this seems to be related to the treatment of the egoism problem from §3.3.1 above – the good human is not thinking about acting virtuously while she is doing so because her focus is on what she's

[122] See Cooper (1977a), esp. 311. The defects Cooper seems to have in mind are psychological; he thinks we are likely to deceive ourselves about our own virtue and believe we are better than we are. He claims we can bridge this gap of self-knowledge through friends, relying on oft-cited arguments from the *Magna Moralia*.

[123] Kosman (2004) also makes this point.

[124] See Whiting (2012), esp. 80-81 and (2006), 295-301. Whiting notes that character friendship might involve a kind of love that is "based not in the subject's needs but rather in her appreciation of the object's positive qualities" (Whiting 2006, 297); and claims that "the pleasure a self-sufficient agent takes in the experiences and actions of her friend is part of what explains why she wants to live and act together with her friend, but the pleasure explains this in a way that does not involve satisfying any bona fide *need* on the part of the self-sufficient agent." (Whiting 2012, 81)

[125] "[T]he supremely happy man will need [*dei*] friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities." (*NE* 1170a3-4) Note Aristotle uses "*dei*" here, which can be translated as 'need,' as Ross has, but can also be translated as 'ought.' Thus, we ought not read into "need" that friends serve an instrumental necessary purpose. Thanks to Jennifer Whiting for this point.

doing.[126] If part of the appreciation of good action is to think about its contribution to or realization in a happy life, one could not fully appreciation one's own good actions while performing them. But if you know your friend is good and can appreciate her good motives in acting, then while perceiving her action, you can think about its relation to a happy life.

I think it is clear the answer to the above question is "yes": the self-sufficient person *does* have reason for having friends. It does not matter for my purposes whether Cooper's or Whiting's view of why is the right one (though it seems highly plausible that the self-sufficient person has reason for having friends because having friends is pleasurable, and contemplation of her virtuous actions is absolutely pleasurable). Either way, the passage supports rejection of virtuous development as the defining feature of friendship.

So, what is the defining feature of character friendship? Recall what Aristotle says is characteristic of friendship: the friends wish each other well *for each other*, or for each other's own sake, and this well-wishing is reciprocal and mutually recognized. The first condition, I claim, is the defining feature of character friendship (reciprocal and mutually recognized well-wishing is shared between all kinds of friendship).[127] As we saw in §3.2, wishing each other well is action-guiding in certain ways. So, the defining feature of friendship is having genuine concern for the other for herself and acting upon this where appropriate. Because friends in a character friendship are good, when one wishes another well for herself, one responds to the essential value in one's friend. It gets intuitively right that the best friendships are based in

[126] As Whiting puts it: "So Aristotle's point may have less to do with the difficulty of self-knowledge than with the difficulty of finding *contemplative* enjoyment in one's own actions, which typically require one's attention to be focused elsewhere." (Whiting 2006, 301)

[127] Philpot seems to share this view, although he notes that wishing goods to one's friend is only "one of the central features" of character friendship. (Philpot 2021, 79)

genuine concern for the other, and there is no worry about *egoism*, *paternalism*, *reductivism*, or *instrumentality* on this view. Let me spell this out a little more slowly.

If the defining feature of friendship is wishing the other well for herself, there is no worry about *egoism*. The friends are not in it for themselves – they are in it for each other, and this genuine concern for the other is frontloaded in this conception of friendship. Each cares for the other for who she is herself. The only worry connected to egoism might be how friendship could then fit with the eudaimonist axiom – perhaps it looks *too* disconnected from one's own good. I address this below; note for now that my answer concerns the pleasure that character friends bring each other.

There is also no worry about *paternalism*, since the aim of each friend is not to correct or improve her friend. Rather, each friend wants the best for the other and acts on this where appropriate. (Note that this *does* entail that character friends help each other improve in virtue where appropriate; I explain this in response to reductivism below.) Some further aspects of the view that ward off worries about paternalism – which I do not fully develop until §3.3.5 but shall flag now – are that friendship is a shared activity among parties who resemble each other in virtue. That the friends resemble each other in virtue ensures that they are not paternally foisting external conceptions of the good on each other. That they act in some sense together ensures a level of mutuality that is foreign to paternalism. Finally, let's reconsider what Aristotle says about development of virtue and whether it seems paternalistic. Aristotle indicates that companionship with the virtuous helps develop virtue. This is because by being around a virtuous person, I learn by example what virtue requires in situations of this type and I may feel as though I must be virtuous around you or else I will feel ashamed. Additionally, some of the textual support mentions just negative reasons why character friendship may improve friends:

since their love is grounded in virtue, they will not offer each other opportunities for vicious conduct. A lack of opportunities for vice surely goes some way towards developing one's virtue. But none of this is paternalistic.

It is also not *reductive*, since even (and especially) the perfectly virtuous can wish another well for herself. I briefly noted above that friends *will* help each other in virtue, but this is not part of the defining feature of friendship; rather, it is an entailment of it. Helping each other develop in virtue or maintain virtue is a necessary accident that follows from the defining feature of friendship; it is a specification of what it is to wish well to a person whose nature includes being virtuous.[128] If I wish you well for yourself and you are essentially a courageous person, then of course I have reason to help you develop or maintain your courage if such circumstances arise. Notably, though, this is not an independent defining feature of the friendship; I help you develop in virtue because that is a determination of what it is to wish you well for yourself. This will allow that the perfectly virtuous can be character friends; while they need not help each other develop in virtue, since they are already virtuous and virtue is an enduring thing, they can help each other maintain their virtue and wish each other well in other ways. Additionally, it need not be reductive in terms of the breadth of reasons of friendship. If we play a board game together, the reason for doing so need not be that it develops your virtue by teaching you justice. For all we have said, it could be just that one of us takes pleasure in playing the game, and the other wants to make her happy.[129]

[128] I follow Aristotle's language here concerning necessary accidents and essences in *Metaphysics* V.30. A necessary accident, he says, "attaches to each thing in virtue of itself but is not in its essence" (1025a30-35). He gives the example of the sum of a triangle's interior angles being equal to two right angles.

[129] To flag developments of my view below: this particular sort of reason attaches to something relatively good (appreciation of board games), and so would not, strictly speaking, fall out of the character friendship relation itself. Nonetheless, because character friends are also relatively pleasurable and useful to each other, my view can take on board these reasons. I defend this in §§3.3.3-3.3.4 below. While the view on which the defining feature of character

Finally, this view of character friendship is not merely *instrumentally* good: the friends appreciate the particular good that they see in the other and take pleasure in this good. This point will be developed more in §3.3.5. For now, recall that character friends are necessarily pleasant to each other since they are both good, and for good people, the good is pleasant. Part of the reason why even the self-sufficient person will have character friends, then, is because they are pleasurable in this necessary way.[130] This both points to the intrinsic good of the friendship – the appreciation of someone who is in fact good – and smooths over worries about how friendship could cohere with the eudaimonist axiom – each friend takes pleasure in the friendship.

For clarity's sake, I want now to say a bit more about how my view differs from contemporary views concerning the development of virtue. First, of the two understandings of virtuous development, only (ii) – X develops Y's virtue – plausibly fits my account of character friendship. It is unclear how (i) – X develops X's virtue – fits into a friendship that is defined around wishing *the other* well for herself. Second, virtuous development is not the defining feature of friendship; it is a *determination* of the defining feature of friendship. As I've noted, since part of realizing your own nature is to be virtuous, if we are character friends, clearly I will wish for you to be virtuous. In fact, it will be necessary that I do so, since this is essential to you. But rather than the defining feature of friendship, this is – again – a necessary consequence of the defining feature of friendship. It is derivative. So, I can accommodate this phenomenon while also maintaining that character friends are, definitionally, genuinely concerned for each other.

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friendship is virtuous development could adopt this claim about relative pleasure and utility to accommodate a greater range of reasons, the primary aspect of reductivism would remain, as would the egoism and instrumentalism problems I identify in the text.

[130] I do not believe it matters for my view whether this pleasure is part of the activity of friendship or supervenes on the activity. Without argument, I will note that I find plausible the view that pleasure in an activity is internal to the activity in its best form. See *NE* X.4, especially 1174b15-24. See also 1175a35-37: "so the pleasures intensify the activities, and what intensifies a thing is proper to it."

And while it is not impossible for the virtuous development view to accommodate genuine concern for the other somewhere along the way, I think it is an important advantage of my view that it makes this genuine concern primary.

3.3.3. The character of character friends

I now turn to the issue of determining what, substantively, the character of the friend in character friendship is supposed to be. If what makes a friendship a character friendship is wishing the other well *for herself* – for her character – we will want to know what this amounts to.

Often, the good character that is essential to a human being is assumed to be exhausted by virtue, which is frequently referred to in the literature as "moral virtue."[131] What is essential to you *qua* human being are these virtues – which just are the excellent functioning of a human being – and so they comprise your character. Any other qualities of yours are merely accidental; they are not had *qua* human. Understanding virtue as exhausting one's character seems like an adequate reading of Aristotle insofar as he claims that it is the virtue of friends that must be similar and the virtue of the other that one loves. He also claims that they must take pleasure and pain in the same things, and Aristotle holds that the mark of the virtuous person is to take pleasure in the good. It is noteworthy that the virtues are *absolutely* good – they are good without qualification, insofar as they are the realization of human nature.

But there is some trickiness here depending on how substantive these virtues are. Some might think that the virtues issue just side constraints, for instance.[132] But if we understand virtue in this way, it seems that the bulk of the individual's character would be left to determine:

[131] Biss (2011), Brewer (2005), Cooper (1977b), Hoyos-Valdés (2017), Jacquette (2001), Kristjánsson (2020), Whiting (2002). Note that Brewer and Hitz (2011) identify character with *nous* but given that virtuous character is unified in practical wisdom, it is unclear that this is a separate claim. At any rate, I do not have the space to consider this option here.

[132] McDowell (1979) may have such a view, expressed in terms of silencing.

negative characteristics don't go very far in determining what a person *is* like and *is* willing to do. The love of this virtuous character would be like loving someone just because they're a law-abiding citizen in a minimal state; you wouldn't actually know much about them. If virtue is more substantive, however, then there would be more to say about the character of an individual. Generosity and beneficence, for instance, can be quite consuming of a good person's time and resources in a way that, say, justice may not. This could amount to a substantive account of the good person's character.

Nonetheless, identifying character with virtue seems excessively restrictive. Surely you can partly define yourself around your sense of humor, athleticism, green thumb, and so on, in addition to being absolutely good or virtuous. And surely your friend should be able to love you for such qualities. So, since what is loved in a character friendship is the friend's character, we will want to include such qualities within their characters.[133] Whiting offers such a view (though she explicitly notes that she does not attempt to defend her reading of Aristotle as "required by or even consistent" with everything he says): she argues that one's e.g. athleticism or artistry can be part of one's character insofar as it is praiseworthy and a proper object of admiration over which the agent has control (thereby excluding natural qualities like good looks).[134] So, not only virtue but also non-virtuous excellences can be part of one's character.

This is intuitively plausible, but can it be Aristotle's account?

One place to look for an answer is in Aristotle's division of the kinds of friendship. The division is most plausibly concerned with what the proper object of love is within the types of

[133] See Whiting (1991) and Payne (2000). Note that while Payne thinks such traits can be part of my character, he doesn't think appreciation of them amounts to perfect friendship.

[134] Whiting says she takes "'character' broadly so as to include all those characteristics for which a person might be praised and admired--not only the moral virtues, but also things like artistic and athletic ability, sensitivity to others, patience, industry and so on." (Whiting 1991, 4) She connects this with the individual's conception of her good, which would likewise include the good of virtue and of athleticism, artistry, and so on.

friendships, since Aristotle discusses what the friends love and in what way one is loved.[135] Because Aristotle claims that only character friends love each other for themselves, if we can figure out in what ways pleasure and utility friends fail to love the other for himself, we might learn about what is essential and what accidental to character. So, let us look more closely at what Aristotle says concerning why pleasure and utility friendships are only incidental:

> 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. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for *themselves*, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to *themselves*, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. (*NE* 1156a10-20)

Aristotle here notes that pleasure friends don't love each other "for their character," that utility friends love each other "in virtue of some good" they receive from the other, and that in both cases, what is loved is not the person "but in so far as he is useful or pleasant." So, what is the good in virtue of which the other is loved, or in what sense is he useful or pleasant? Does one love the other coincidentally because she loves only some effect the other has on her – being useful to her or pleasant to her in some way – and therefore only indirectly love the other's

[135] One might think that Aristotle is attending to the *grounds* of friendship, rather than the *object* of friendship, in the following passages. That is, the 'love each other *for*' should be understood as 'love each other *on account of*' and so on. In this case, my discussion should be read as concerning the different grounds of friendship, and I would then need a separate claim connecting the ground of character friendship (virtuous character) to the object of character friendship (virtuous character). I am not fully convinced that the ground and object of love in Aristotelian friendship come apart. But, at any rate, the argument that they *do* addresses pleasure and utility friendship rather than character friendship – in character friendship, it seems accepted that the ground and object are identical. (For instance, Cooper [1977b] and Whiting [2006] argue that pleasure and utility friendships meet the condition of friendship – wishing the other well for her own sake – by acknowledging that while the ground of love in utility friendships might be just the benefit one gets from one's friend, the object is the friend herself. To use Cooper's example, a shop owner may love his customer in virtue of the utility he derives from her but might still wish her well for her own sake. However, Cooper acknowledges that the different grounds still affect the well-wishing; the extent of well-wishing is lesser in utility friendships than character friendships. [1977b, 644]) So, I do not think this is problematic for my view.

character? Or would directly loving some pleasant or useful properties of the person – such as her athleticism – still amount to loving her coincidentally, insofar as such properties are not essential to who she is?

Before addressing these questions and determining if there is anything we can learn about the character of character friends from the coincidental nature of pleasure and utility friendships, let me introduce some vocabulary to clarify the logical space. A quality may be loved *directly* if the object of love is that very quality (e.g. ready wit). A quality may be loved *indirectly* if it is some effect of that quality on the lover which is loved (e.g. the pleasure your ready wit causes me). A quality may be *essential* if it properly belongs to the character of the character friend (e.g. temperance). A quality may be *accidental* if it does not properly belong to the character of the character friend (e.g. ready wit).

It seems clear that when Aristotle says that character friends love each other for themselves, by virtue of their own nature, he means that character friends love each other's *essential* qualities *directly*. But insofar as character friendship subsumes pleasure and utility friendship, it seems plausible that they love each other's *essential* qualities also *indirectly* – since they take pleasure in each other's virtue, it is plausible they love this pleasure they are caused, too. (I am not ascribing this view to Aristotle, but it seems plausible.)

There is a question, however, about in what respect Aristotle thinks pleasure and utility friendships are only coincidental. Is it that pleasure and utility friends (i) *directly* love *accidental* qualities, (ii) *indirectly* love *accidental* qualities, or (iii) *indirectly* love *essential* qualities? (Note that if they (iv) *directly* love *essential* qualities, they are character friends.) I will argue below that at least (i) amounts to coincidental friendship. This will ferry us to an account of essential qualities of character.

Let me explicitly connect this to my current object of inquiry. If Aristotle intends (i) as a viable reading of why pleasure and utility friendship are only coincidental, then it will be clear that a person can have some qualities that are only accidental to her character, and love of them does not constitute loving her for herself. Aristotle's claim (from above) that "it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant" suggests something like (i), insofar as "ready-witted" is surely a quality a person can have that another can love. But Aristotle waves this off as loving the other only for pleasure rather than for her character. There will then be a question about what makes some qualities essential to a character, and what makes others merely accidental. If what makes a quality essential to a character is that one identifies with an admirable and praiseworthy quality over which she has control, then we can endorse Whiting's wide conception of character.

There is not much of a relevant difference between (ii) and (iii), since neither plausibly amounts to love of the other for her own sake or for herself, so I will treat them together. If Aristotle intends only (ii) and/or (iii), then the coincidental nature of pleasure and utility friendships does not entail anything substantive about which qualities are essential to a good character; it bears only on whether one loves the other or some relation she bears to the other.[136] To see this, consider that in pleasure and utility friendships, the relation that you love with

[136] This reading is suggested by St. Thomas Aquinas ([1566] 1964) in his commentary on the *NE*. There he says that utility friends don't love each other for their own sake, and "The same is true of those who love each other on account of pleasantness, for the one does not love the other precisely as witty or virtuous in merriment but merely as pleasant to himself" (Aquinas [1566] 1964, 484). Whiting and Payne also seem to adopt something akin to this weaker reading. Whiting writes: "Loving a person for her own sake is loving her on account of who or what she is essentially, and is distinguished from loving her only accidentally, as in friendships for pleasure and utility where what the agent really loves are the *benefits* accruing to *him* on account of the relationship in which she *happens* to stand to his desires and interests. Since this relationship does not make her who or what she is essentially, he does not really love *her* for her own sake." (Whiting 1991, 18-9) And Payne writes: "They do not enjoy the pleasures of wit *as* the morally serious man does." (Payne 2000, 67, my emphasis) I do not think Whiting and Payne would agree about their readings, however, since Whiting explicitly claims that people can be wrong about their characters (18), and Payne seems to hold a person's character is whatever she thinks it is.

respect to the other in (iii) is an essential aspect of the person – your love stems from the fact that she is beneficent, perhaps – but it is not her beneficence that you love. What you love is the *way* in which her beneficence affects you; you love the pleasure you derive from her beneficence being directed towards you, perhaps, or the use that it brings you. In this sense, your love of her is coincidental; it concerns a particular way of being beneficent that happens to be pleasurable to or useful for you. It is not *direct* appreciation of your friend's beneficence. This would not, evidently, be of much use in figuring out Aristotle's views on the content of good character.

Some plausibility for thinking Aristotle intends only (ii) and/or (iii) as coincidental is found in drawing attention to his claim above that the pleasure or utility friend loves the other "not *as being* the man he is […] but *as providing* some good or pleasure" and "in virtue of some good which they *get* from each other." 'Providing' and 'getting' some good or pleasure suggest that the difference between character and the lower friendships is only one of mode – of *indirectly* rather than *directly* loving the other – rather than one about essential or accidental qualities. As an intuitive matter, it is easy to see why Aristotle would claim such friendships are only coincidental. Loving some effect of the person on oneself hardly amounts to love of that person for herself.[137]

Note that if only (ii) and (iii) amount to incidental friendship, (i) would either amount to character friendship or be an empty class. (Perhaps all aspects of a person's character would be

[137] Furthermore, we might worry that such friendships aren't really friendships at all, insofar as one would seem to wish the friend well only insofar as she keeps providing such benefits and pleasure. (See Cooper [1977b] for this worry, esp. 636-639.) This relies on a view about the ground and object of love being identical, as discussed in fn. 134 above. One could resolve such a worry if she argued that what these passages are about is the ground of love in the kinds of friendship – what elevates X and Y's relation to one of friendship – while maintaining that the friendship relation itself gives reasons to wish the other well for her own sake. In this case, the ground of love and object of love are not identical. (See Whiting [2006]) So, while it is not an ideal friendship, it still qualifies as friendship. Since my concern is just character friendship, which is indisputably the ideal kind of friendship and in which the ground and object seem most plausibly identical, such considerations exceed the scope of my paper.

essential, or the non-virtuous ones could be cashed out in relational terms, such that they wouldn't themselves be, strictly speaking, qualities.)

Now that we have canvassed this range of possibilities, let's turn back to (i). Cooper, for one, thinks that (i) *does* amount to coincidental friendship.[138] He argues that in character friendship, what is loved are the essential *and virtuous* qualities – those partly constitutive of being a good human – and what is loved in pleasure and utility friendships are merely accidental qualities of any given particular human.[139] Thus, there are some qualities that are not properly part of the other's character. Courage can be loved in a character friendship, but something accidental to being a good human, like being a patisserie chef or a coffee connoisseur, is not a proper object of love of the good as such. If Cooper is right, (i) brings us right to the heart of the matter: we get not only an assertion that some qualities of a person are accidental and love of them does not amount to loving her for herself, we *also* get a substantive account of what makes a quality essential or accidental – whether it is necessary for realizing the human good (essential) or not (accidental).

I think Cooper is right about both claims, though we might want more defense for them. Let me start first by providing some evidence in favor of including (i) as coincidental, which will also support Cooper's understanding of essential qualities. When Aristotle discusses the causes of failed friendship in *NE* IX.1, he explains the dissolution in terms of qualities which were loved but not enduring:

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[138] Whiting seems to as well. After arguing that pleasure and utility friends wish each other well for their own sake, she claims that in order to distinguish character friendship from those two, Aristotle would appeal to something essential: "So he appeals to the idea that *this* [the character friend's] wishing is based on something essential to who the *other* is, and not simply on accidental features of her that might change with time, including the relationships in which she stands to the agent's own contingent tastes and/or needs." (Whiting 2006, 287) So does Philpot: "Aristotle describes each kind of *philia* as being 'because of' [dia] the object of love, and this object of love is an *accidental* property in the case of pleasure and utility *philiai* but an intrinsic feature in primary *philia*." (Philpot 2021, 109)

[139] Cooper (1977b).

> Such incidents happen when the lover loves the beloved for the sake of pleasure while the beloved loves the lover for the sake of utility, and they do not both possess *the qualities expected of them*. If these be *the objects of the friendship* it is dissolved when they do not get the things that formed the motives of their love; *for each did not love the other person himself but the qualities he had, and these were not enduring.* (*NE* 1164a7-12, my emphases)

Important here is the centrality of qualities in pleasure and utility friendships, and that some qualities are not enduring but were loved. This suggests that (ii) and (iii) don't fully capture Aristotle's diagnosis of coincidental friendship insofar as they are silent with respect to non-enduring qualities that are the basis of love. Aristotle notes that "goodness is an enduring thing" (*NE* 1156b7), so this isn't analogous to the above case of the pleasure friend loving you for the way your beneficence affects her.[140] The diagnosis here indicates that the problem is that one loves something non-enduring about a person. So, non-enduringness is at least a mark of accidental qualities. Such non-enduring qualities are not part of the other person himself, and thus not objects of love for character friends. Evidently, then, (i) does amount to coincidental friendship.

But we need to consider in more detail what makes a property accidental, and what essential. If we use the distinction made in the passage quoted above, we might make the jump from "enduring qualities" to those necessary for living a good human life. Why think this is plausible? Without going into too much detail, this is because – as was noted above – virtuous activity just is the good functioning of the human being. To be virtuous is to be a good human. And part of

[140] I also find it unlikely that Aristotle understands "qualities" as something like modes of virtuous conduct, or ways of being virtuous, which reading would support the weak view. While it is likely that the way in which I am virtuous changes – perhaps you needed my beneficence today, but will not tomorrow – it would be strange to describe that as a quality that I had which is not enduring. Additionally, since what virtue calls for is situational, it would be unlikely that any quality of virtue would be enduring.

the reason goodness is an enduring thing is because it is a self-perpetuating cycle when entered; virtue sustains itself, in no small part because the virtuous person takes pleasure in the good.

Nonetheless, even if goodness is enduring, this will be unhelpful for our purposes unless all enduring qualities are also essential. But surely they are not. Take, for instance, one's physical qualities. Your eye color is an enduring quality of yours. Even if you do not attach any value to having brown eyes, it is an enduring quality that you have brown eyes. But your eye color is an only accidental quality; you could have been born with green eyes. So, if we take enduringness to be our path to character, we would be stuck with permitting qualities like those of virtue *and* arbitrary qualities that follow from birth to be essential.

So, we need a different way to distinguish essential from accidental qualities, even if all non-enduring qualities are accidental. I argue that the restrictive view of character, under which what is essential to character is just virtue, is supported by attention to the distinction between absolutely good qualities and relatively good qualities. First, note that Aristotle's conception of the human good is rigid – there is a determinate set of absolutely good qualities, and they are just the virtues. We have seen that he claims that the virtuous will be similar in character – he claims that character friends love each other "by reason of their own nature" (*NE* 1156b7) – and he insists that "the actions of the good *are* the same or like" (*NE* 1156b18). He also notes, in *NE* X.5, that the "pleasures proper to man" are just those that the perfect and supremely happy man will have, and any other pleasures and the activities that give rise to them are "secondary and fractional" (1176a26-29). So, there is good evidence to think that Aristotle holds that the human good is universal and common; what is good *qua* human are properties that *all* good humans

necessarily share. These are the set of absolutely good properties. Anything else is secondary – or, what is the same, relative.[141]

Now, from this, I suggest it follows that absolutely good qualities exhaust the character that is loved in character friendship – it tells the whole story of what it means to love a good person for herself. This is because any other quality will be, strictly speaking, only relatively good. And if it is only relatively good, from the vantage point of the human good, it just is accidental. It would be a matter of coincidence that Y appreciates this accidental quality of X's. Finally, recall that coincidentality is germane to the lower friendships but excluded from character friendship. So, *qua* character friends, one could not love what is relatively good in the other. One's character is exhausted by those absolutely good qualities, which just are essential to the good person.

If this is right, then non-virtuous excellences like athleticism and artistry are not proper objects of love within a character friendship; they are only accidental and relatively good qualities of any given person, and so love of them will be coincidental.

I will say a bit more about this bifurcation of essential and accidental qualities along such lines to argue for its independent plausibility. I have noted that non-virtuous excellences like athleticism and artistry are relatively good. While it is true that if I strongly identify as an artist, this is likely to be an enduring quality of mine, there would be only a relative sense in which it could be 'essential.' Consider Sam Gamgee again. If Sam conceives of himself as a gardener and crucially values himself under this description – which he does – then it is 'essential' to Sam to be a gardener. There is a sense in which he would be a different person if he were, instead, a brewer. Even so, despite the core role 'gardener' plays in Sam's self-identity, it does not follow

[141] Note that not all accidental qualities are relatively good. Some might be bad or value neutral, of course. But I suggest that what is absolutely good is equivalent to what is essential, and that what is relatively good is a subset of what is accidental.

that being a gardener is partly constitutive of Sam. We can conceive of Sam as being a brewer and remaining the good Hobbit – the loyal and courageous Hobbit – that he is. But of course we cannot conceive of Sam as being the good Hobbit he is if he were not loyal and courageous.

The virtues, insofar as they are partly constitutive of the good human life, are necessary and essential in a way that non-virtuous excellences are not. There is an important difference between the absolute good and the relative good, and I think there is something intuitively right in identifying essential qualities with the former. There is a sense in which it is a comforting thought – one we might be glad about – to know that our character friends love us in virtue of something about us that is essential *qua* human. Even if Sam follows the path of his Old Gaffer and decides to pursue ale-brewing rather than gardening, because Frodo (and Rosie) love Sam for something more basic and universal than his devotion to growing things, they would love him through his change. Were we to include among Sam's essential properties his being a gardener, then were he to abandon this essential activity in favor of brewing, Frodo (and Rosie) should pose to themselves an important question: is this still the friend I love? Do I still have reason to promote and further his ends? When we relegate these important but nonetheless relative goods outside our essential character, we can better capture the permanence among the best kinds of friendships. There should be no question for Frodo (and Rosie) that Sam the Ale Brewer is still the Hobbit they love.

As noted, we are stuck with a worry that character friendship fails to allow friends to love each other for values and traits we might strongly identify with. We will see, in §3.3.5 below, that this invites additional worries about not being loved for oneself.

However, we are not committed to the claim that character friends *cannot* love each other's relatively good qualities, just that this does not amount to love of the other for himself and is

therefore not love *qua* character friendship. Attention to Aristotle's claim that character friends are also pleasurable and useful to each other gives us resources to avoid the bite of this worry. Let's say that the object of Frodo's love as Sam's character friend is the courage, loyalty, respect for life, and so on that he sees in Sam; this is what it is to love Sam for himself. But of course Sam greatly values his being a gardener. Frodo *can* love Sam under this description, just not *qua* character friend. If character friends are also relatively pleasant and useful to each other, as we saw in §3.2, then it seems that character friendship subsumes pleasure and utility friendship. And it will be *qua* pleasure friends that Frodo loves Sam the Gardener (and perhaps also utility friends, since Sam is Frodo's gardener).

As noted above, this is an important distinction; it permits Sam to shed these accidental qualities – being a gardener, an avid cook, etc. – without undermining his core friendship with Frodo. By relegating these accidental qualities outside the object of character friendship, we need not worry about the friendship dissolving if this quality proves unenduring. But love of the other as pleasant and useful in this coincidental way is available to them as pleasure and utility friends. So, while the object of love in character friendship is just Sam's virtue, Frodo can and should still love Sam for his accidental qualities insofar as it coincides that Frodo does in fact appreciate Sam's green thumb. Furthermore, though this love is coincidental, it can still generate reasons for Frodo. Insofar as growing a good crop is among Sam's ends, Frodo will have reason to wish him well in virtue of this shared appreciate of a relative good (perhaps just by asking him how his seedlings are doing). So, we can still capture the fact that the best of friends love each other for non-virtuous excellences and have reasons with respect to such relative goods. It is unclear to me what more we could want from an account of good friendship.

3.3.4. The similarity of character friends' characters

Aristotle says repeatedly that character friends are similar; he even says that they are related to us as to an "other" self. He also says they have the same tastes, are similar in virtue, choose the same things, enjoy and dislike the same things, share much in common, and so on. But what does this amount to? First, in what *sorts of ways* are the friends similar? Is it just that they are similar in virtue, or must they also be similar in more ways than this, possibly including aesthetically, dispositionally, socially, and so on? Second, once we have settled the scope of ways in which they must be similar, we can ask: to what *degree* they must be similar? Aristotle does not claim they must be qualitatively indistinguishable, so presumably they are permitted to differ a bit. But we may wonder how much difference is acceptable for an ideal friendship.

Given the finding of the previous section that the essential character of character friends is exhausted by virtue, a hasty answer to the two questions may be that the friends must be qualitatively indistinguishable in virtue but not in any of their accidental qualities. But such a contention would be overridden by Aristotle's claim that character friends may be unequal in terms of virtue.[142] Such inequality can be found in a friendship between teacher and learner, for instance, and between friends who are developing at different rates. So long as the gap between the virtue of the friends is not too large – such that they have near nothing in common – such a relationship can be a friendship; and insofar as what they love about the other is the particular goodness of the other, rather than the way in which they are e.g. useful to each other, it is a character friendship in particular. Though Aristotle does not think this is ideally how character friends should be related, his acceptance of inequalities of virtue between character friends goes

[142] *NE* VIII.7 & 12, IX.1

at least part of the way towards addressing my second question (concerning the permissible degree of difference). But what about the ideal case? How similar in virtue *should* the friends be?

A clue that can help us here is Aristotle's claim that a friend is an "other" self. He connects this with our gaining self-knowledge, which is generated from contemplating this other self, in part through shared activity and growth.[143] Since character friends adopt each other's ends and act together (or "live together," as Aristotle puts it), it is not surprising that they will be similar. Now, one might think this commits us to thinking that ideally the friends will be qualitatively indistinguishable. If I learn about myself through perceiving you and your actions, don't I gain the most self-knowledge when you are essentially a copy of me?[144]

We need not be committed to this radical claim. Some contemporary commentators acknowledge the role character friendship plays in generating self-knowledge *and* argue that some difference between the friend and the self is good for this. While the friends must be quite similar, some difference is needed to confront the friend on her character. Mavis Biss, Nancy Sherman, and Whiting all seem to accept something like this.[145] The friends must be similar in sharing something like the same formal conception of what is good – agreeing about ends – while substantive differences in particulars – something like means – is permissible and helpful for self-knowledge.[146] Whiting gives a helpful example of such a balance of similarity

[143] Note that most commentators reject the *Magna Moralia*'s "mirror view," which Brewer describes as "a static and complacent mutual admiration society" (Brewer 2005, 726). This view holds that one gains self-knowledge by, in effect, contemplating a self that is qualitatively indistinguishable to one's own. Most commentators take issue with the claim that self-knowledge can be passive in this way, though I am not persuaded that one could not gain self-knowledge in this way. See Hitz (2011), Biss (2011), Brewer (2005) and Sherman (1987) for the shared activity view.

[144] Hitz (2011) seems to be committed to something like this.

[145] Biss (2011, 131), Sherman (1987, 598-9), Whiting (2016, 68-9).

[146] And also, perhaps, for developing one's virtue – see Whiting (2016) on the role of distrust in maintaining properly virtuous selves. "These reciprocal attitudes [of distrusting each other so that they can examine their views] are a function of the character-friends' common view that it is at least part of the point of their friendship to promote one another's good, which they take to consist largely (if not exclusively) in living virtuously" (Whiting 2016, 71 fn. 14).

concerning justice. While you and I may both value justice and agree that it requires improving the position of Black people in society (a formal agreement), we may disagree about how to achieve or realize this result in the world if one of us thinks that color-blind policies would be a good means to achieve this goal and the other does not (a substantive disagreement).[147]

I think this is a plausible account of how similar *in virtue* character friends must be. As we have seen already, Aristotle notes that all friendship is "based on a certain resemblance; and to friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves" (*NE* 1156b19-22); that "equality and likeness are friendship, and especially likeness of those who are like in virtue" (*NE* 1159b2-3); and that "the actions of the good *are* the same or like" (*NE* 1156b18). But I think the text also supports a much more extensive similarity between character friends. Aristotle claims that common upbringing and similarity of age contribute greatly to friendship;[148] that friends approve of the same things and are delighted and pained by the same things;[149] and that friends have the same tastes.[150]

Aristotle's claims about common upbringing and taking pleasure and pain in the same things can be understood as concerning virtue: Aristotle thinks right upbringing is at least helpful for being virtuous and the good person takes pleasure in virtue and pain in vice. So, I will focus on taste to make my point. (As we will see, I think the point about pleasure and pain is strongly related to the point about taste, and it would be unsurprising if common upbringing and similarity in age help determine one's tastes). Character friends must have similar tastes, and

[147] Whiting (2016), 92.

[148] In his quasi-interlude on justice and political communities, Aristotle also seems to suggest that there must be civic equality between any potential friends, in part so that they may share things in common. It is unclear that this is necessary, though, since he also mentions that a slave and owner could be friends if they considered each other as humans. I think the most plausible way to understand Aristotle's claim about civic equality, then – just as with the rest of the kinds of resemblance I suggest occur in character friendship – *facilitates* but does not *make possible* friendship. It is common to friendship, but perhaps not necessary for all friendships.

[149] *NE* 1165b28.

[150] *NE* 1166a2-9.

tastes are clearly not a matter of virtue. As a minor textual point, it would be highly surprising if Aristotle used "tastes" where he meant to refer to pleasure in the absolute good. So, what does this claim amount to?

I will argue that there are two respects in which tastes are shared between character friends: first, similar tastes facilitate spending time together (or living together), which Aristotle notes is a mark of character friendship; second, similar tastes facilitate seeing the other *as good*, which is of course necessary for being character friends in the first place. I do not argue that the friends must have all the same tastes, but I believe my argument supports the claim that, ideally, the friends will have considerable overlap of tastes.

First, let me clarify what is meant by "tastes." I think the most plausible way to understand "tastes" here is widely; it includes appreciation of relative goods, such that one's interest in artistry or athletics is a matter of taste. Surely Aristotle does not mean to suggest that we must share tastes in the narrow aesthetic sense that we must enjoy the same flavors, music, and so on. It is highly implausible to claim that character friends characteristically share e.g. the same favorite ice cream flavor. What is plausible, however, is that friends share appreciation of similar relative goods – that Sam and Frodo both find gardening to be a worthwhile and valuable activity, for instance. This fits with our earlier finding that character friends have reasons with respect to the relatively good ends of their friends – since they are pleasure friends in addition to character friends, their tastes will coincide to some degree. So, I think this is an intuitive and plausible way to understand character friends' similarity in tastes. I will now argue that this is the best understanding of what Aristotle has in mind, too.

We saw in §3.2 that Aristotle claims character friends spend time together. And in order to spend time together, it seems they must share tastes: Aristotle notes that "people cannot live

together if they are not pleasant and do not enjoy the same things, as friends who are companions seems to do" (*NE* 1157b22-24)[151] and that if the friends' interests change then it will no longer be the case that "with regard to each other will their tastes agree, and without this […] they cannot be friends; for they cannot live together" (*NE* 1165b28-30). This agreement goes beyond virtue. Aristotle himself notes that humans cannot contemplate all the time – we are too finite for this.[152] So, character friends cannot just contemplate the good and pursue virtuous actions together, even if that is what the friends love most in life.[153] They must also occasionally take breaks. What fills in these gaps must be agreeable to both, just as Aristotle notes that some men drink together or play dice together. So, as a matter of fact, character friends have coincident tastes – they take pleasure in similar relative goods.

Additionally, Aristotle notes that if there is a group of character friends, "they too must be friends of one another, if they are all to spend their days together; and it is a hard business for this condition to be fulfilled with a large number" (*NE* 1171a3-5). Since by definition they are all good, there must be something other than dissimilar virtue that makes greater numbers of character friends difficult. Put another way, if friends are similar only in virtue, and must be quite similar in virtue (which we determined above), then it would be puzzling why any two good people who knew each other couldn't be friends. These people should bear *eunoia* towards each other, but the step from *eunoia* to *philia* is facilitated by a greater scope of similarity than only virtue. The bridge to *philia* is paved by coincidence of taste.

As an example, consider that even if Legolas and Gimli are absolutely good to a similar degree, if Legolas valued the natural beauty only of forests and Gimli valued the natural beauty

[151] The point about the people being pleasant is made in connection with "old people," whom Aristotle claims are not pleasant.

[152] See *NE* 1176b34-36.

[153] See *NE* IX.12.

only of subterranes, then they could not travel together. Even though they both appreciate some aspect of natural beauty, it is important that their appreciation coincide to a greater degree. For the two to 'live together,' they must be engaged in joint activities, and this will depend upon a coincidence of appreciation of relative goods.

So, character friends' tastes are similar insofar as that facilitates spending time together. But there is another, more interesting, sense in which tastes are similar among character friends: appreciation of the same relative goods facilitates seeing another person *as* absolutely good. Aristotle says, "One cannot be a friend to many people in the sense of having friendship of the perfect type with them […] and it is not easy for many people at the same time to please the same person very greatly, or perhaps even to be good in his eyes" (*NE* 1158a10-13). The subjective statement of being "good in *his* eyes" (emphasis added) indicates that some person is objectively good, but the agent nonetheless does not see her as good. And the antecedent linkage with pleasing others suggests that some sort of coincidence of relative pleasure is related to this mismatch.

Now, the "perhaps" may indicate that this is merely an *endoxon*, but there is other reason to think that to see someone as good, something beyond virtue is required. For Aristotelian virtue ethics, there is no universal language of goodness. In order to know that an action is good, we must know the intent of the person in acting; furthermore, we may need to know more about the situation of the person and what her resources and ends are. After all, Aristotle claims that virtue is a mean relative to us as particular individuals.[154] So, you and I may both be just, but the ways in which we are just can be different without entailing that one of us is less just than the other. The ways in which virtues are manifested or realized in us can look starkly different. To

[154] *NE* II.4.

ascertain, then, that any given person is good – to have *eunoia* for her in the first place – one will have to be in a position to recognize that some particular action or activity is in fact a manifestation of goodness. Shared tastes at least facilitate this comprehension; such coincidence is amenable to a similar agential perspective, by the lights of which one could recognize the likely intent and purpose behind the activity. If so, this more extensive similarity facilitates recognizing the goodness realized in a person's activity.

As an example, consider the slow development of admiration that occurs between Faramir and Frodo and Faramir and Sam in Book Four of *The Lord of the Rings*. The trio's shared appreciation of the Elves serves as bridge to their understanding one another, and to their seeing each other as trustworthy and good. In Faramir's case, his doubt of Frodo's account dissolves when he learns that Frodo and Sam have come from Lothlorien. This revelation facilitates Faramir's understanding of Frodo's "strange" mannerisms in answering his interrogatory questions, now that he perceives an "Elvish air" in Frodo.[155] And on Sam's part, despite witnessing Faramir's leadership and courage in battle, his grace and fairness in interrogating Frodo, and lenience in applying the strict laws of Gondor to Frodo and himself, Sam does not abandon his suspicion that Faramir hides a "foul heart"[156] until Faramir expresses reverence for the Elves (and gives them good food and wine, which is of course crucial in the eyes of a Hobbit).[157] In this case, love of the Elves extends a bridge of intelligibility between the Hobbits and Faramir; a contingent and coincident appreciation facilitates their seeing each other as good.

[155] Tolkien (2004), 668.
[156] Tolkien (2004), 675.
[157] Tolkien (2004), 676-9. "[Sam] had noted that Faramir seemed to refer to Elves with reverence, and this even more than his courtesy, and his food and wine, had won Sam's respect and quieted his suspicions." (Tolkien 2004, 679)

If this is right, then the similarity between character friends is more extensive than is normally supposed. Not only are friends similar in virtue, they are also similar in tastes (which, recall, is most plausibly understood as appreciation of relative goods). I also think this is highly plausible to contemporary ears, and that this helps us recapture the thought that the best of friends share appreciation of many relatively good things. Additionally, I think it is clear my argument does not support the easily counter-exampled claim that character friends must be qualitatively indistinguishable in taste. They must be *similar enough* for the above two points: spending time together and seeing the other as good.

Note that this more extensive similarity does not *ground* each friend's concern for the other; it just facilitates their friendship.[158] What makes you an appropriate object of love is your virtue; what helps us spend our days together and see the good in each other are our coincident tastes. So, this point is compatible with my earlier findings.

This finding should also help clarify a plausible response to one of the classical and pressing issues in character friendship, as we will see now.

3.3.5. The object of love: the friend, or the good?

Aristotle claims that character friends love each other as good, and *because* they are good. So, one might worry: does one love *the friend* or just love *the good* as it occurs in one's friend?[159] This worry might arise because we noted that Aristotle thinks that there are three aspects of being that are lovable, one of which is as good. So, it seems that what one loves about and admires in her friend – and that for which her friend admires her back – is the goodness of her

[158] As Whiting puts this point: "Nor does Aristotle mention *homonoia* among the candidates for constitutive conditions. He no doubt thinks that character-friends are both similar in character and like-minded. But he may think that such similarity and like-mindedness are more productive of *philia* than constitutive of it" (Whiting 2006, 91); "Although commentators often stress the similarity in character of Aristotelian character-friends, it is the content of your friend's character, and not its similarity to your own, that does the justificatory work" (Whiting 2016, 91).

[159] See Vlastos (1981) for the initial presentation of these worries.

character. But surely, the objector continues, I should be loved as a unique individual. If I am loved because I am good, which all good people share, then I am not loved for me.

This problem is related to but slightly different from the worry concerning the substitutability of character friends, which is that if it is the good in one's friend that is loved, then any good person would do. Accordingly, I will first address the object of love – what is loved in the friend – and then address whether character friends are substitutable, depending on the answer. (Obviously if it is the very friend who is loved, the issue does not arise.)

In response to this worry, Whiting points out that if goodness is essentially a part of your character, insofar as it is partly constitutive of being a good human to be good in this way, then it is not troublesome that I love the good I perceive in you. It is essential to you, and you value *yourself* under this description. So, it is not a misappreciation of who you are to love you for your goodness.[160]

But this answer raises questions about substitutability. The objector may point out that if I love you for your goodness, which is essential to who you are *qua* human being, then *any* good human being should deserve my love. If what is loved is "good human being" or even the particular properties or ways of being that make a good human being good – such as "just," "courageous," and "beneficent" – then without any loss to me, the objector continues, I should be able to swap my current friend out for any other good human being I find.

This, of course, is an unattractive conception of friendship, so we will want to avoid this. Towards this end, Whiting and Talbot Brewer argue, separately, that I must appreciate your goodness as your own historical achievement.[161] In this sense, the good I love is specifically

[160] Whiting (1991).
[161] See Whiting (1991) and Brewer (2005).

indexed to you. Being a good human takes effort and work, so when I appreciate your goodness (and you mine) each recognizes *the other* as the achiever of that good. If this is right, then my love of your goodness isn't universal and therefore replaceable.

I think this is right, and from the resources gained from §3.3.4 above, we can cash this out in some detail. It is not just that Frodo loves $\text{goodness}_{\text{Sam}}$, it is that this goodness is qualitatively different from the goodness realized in another person. Goodness, we saw, is relativized to a person; it is packaged in the bearer's own set of qualities. Courage for Faramir, Captain of Gondor, will look very differently from courage for Sam, Frodo's gardener. And while these realizations of courage can of course be compared in some respects, such comparisons must always be made with sensitivity to the circumstances of the bearer of the courage. By this, I mean to cast doubt on the aptness of a judgment such as 'Faramir is more courageous than Sam' (which judgment might be used to claim that Frodo – if he values courage – *ought* to replace Sam with Faramir). Now, while it is courage that Frodo values, it is neither the case that he could swap Sam's courage for Faramir's, nor is it the case that Frodo loves just generic courage in either case. This is especially true on Aristotle's view, since, as already noted, the universal is known through particulars. Frodo then has no general conception of courage outside of exposure to and contemplation of particular realizations of courage. So, Sam's particular instantiation of courage is the object of Frodo's admiration, and this could not be substituted with no loss by someone else's instantiation of courage.[162] And while Frodo's love of Sam and his love of e.g. Bilbo are grounded in the same concern for the good, the object in each case is obviously different.

[162] This isn't a conceptual point – I take it that it is *possible* for someone to have the exact same circumstances and character such that her instantiation of justice is indistinguishable from yours. But it is exceedingly unlikely. I think this is no more problematic an issue than trying to figure out whether I should or should not love my partner's clone in the same way I love him, and thus that this is not a concern unique to character friendship.

So, I think it is plausible to argue that Aristotle's character friend both appreciates the friend for who she is and that her friend isn't substitutable for any other good person.

3.4. A novel account of Aristotelian character friendship

To sum up, the account of Aristotelian character friendship that I defend settles the above five problems in the following ways. First, character friends are motivated to act for each other not because it realizes their own *eudaimonia*, but out of genuine concern for the other. Second, the defining feature of character friendship is wishing well to the other for herself. It is a necessary accident, or a realization, of this defining feature that an agent act in ways to develop *her friend*'s virtue. Third, the character of our friends, which is the object of our love, is exhausted by their virtue, since only the absolutely good is essential to any human being. Fourth, friends are similar in not only virtue but also in tastes, which I understand widely to pick out appreciation of relative goods. This similarity facilitates but does not ground the friendship. And finally, fifth, character friends love each other *qua* good, but still love *each other* – not just "the good" – since this good is both essential to who each friend is and realized in a particular and idiosyncratic manner in the individual.

What I have done is in part to unify discrete elements from the literature on Aristotelian character friendship and in part to contribute new materials to this literature. My argument concerning a more extensive similarity of character friends is the new material which I think helps form a more plausible picture of Aristotelian character friendship. In other places (such as in §§3.3.2, 3.3.3, and 3.3.5) I have contributed what I believe are new arguments for already extant positions in the literature. In any case, the Franken-account that I offer seems to be unique and, I think, sufficiently plausible to hold water in contemporary philosophical discussions about friendship.

Let me analyze the case of Sam and Frodo to concretize the view. Neither Sam nor Frodo is perfectly good. At the outset of their journey across Middle Earth, Sam is both overly humble and insufficiently reflective, and Frodo is at least excessively deferential. Nonetheless, what seems both to ground their friendship and to be the object of their love is the goodness that they perceive in each other: Sam marvels at Frodo's grace and wisdom, and Frodo appreciates Sam's stout heart and courage. These states, which are manifestations of virtue, figure in both as ground for their concern, and also as part of the object of their concern. Their friendship is, I think, clearly a character friendship.

Now, it is also the case that Frodo and Sam are quite similar (and not just because they are both Hobbits); they coincide in many of the relative goods that they value. Unlike most Hobbits of the Shire, they are adventurous and curious about Elves and the wider world as they have heard of it through Bilbo and Gandalf (although Frodo realizes these interests to a greater degree than Sam). They also have a love of song and poetry more akin to Elves than to Hobbits, and Frodo appreciates Sam's attempts at poetry. And while the object of concern in character friendship is the good as it is realized particularly in the Hobbits, since character friends are also pleasurable and useful to each other, they still love coincidentally the more extensive similarities that they share. This helps facilitate the friendship in part by generating opportunities for joint activity.

Finally, we may note that while Sam and Frodo both develop greatly through the quest – both Hobbits gain in temperance and courage at minimum – this development is not the primary object of the friendship. It is a result of their shared activity, company, and circumstances. Consider, for instance, Sam's courageous intervention between Shelob and Frodo: he acts out of

genuine concern for Frodo. While it is good for Sam to have intervened, if he were motivated by thoughts of his own glory or improvement, we would be less sympathetic judges of his courage.

My interpretation of character friendship, then, seems to give a plausible rendering of the goodness of my test case of Sam and Frodo's friendship. It does not over-moralize their friendship and seems adequate to the task of recognizing the reasons and concerns that the Hobbits have towards each other.

Conclusion

The worry that motivates my project, which I have called the burdensomeness objection, is one that concerns whether a good agent is able to be a good friend. I have claimed that there are two strategies normative ethical theories may employ to make space for being a good friend.

Consider again the *externalist* strategy: it accepts the possibility of genuine conflict between reasons of morality and friendship and holds that it is sometimes permissible to act upon the reason of friendship. In this vein, I argued in the first chapter that Korsgaard's externalist account of constitutivism fails to leave space for friendship. The account would have to include some mechanism which permits obligations of friendship to override obligations of morality. But given that obligations of morality stem from what it is to act *at all*, no such mechanism is forthcoming. In the inevitable circumstances in which what we owe to others and our obligations of friendship conflict, any agent must act on the moral requirement.

I now suggest that the externalist strategy in general is not very promising, for what could arbitrate between moral reasons and reasons of friendship or other values? It is mysterious what sort of arch-value could fill this role. One might think that it could be the human good, but it is hard to make sense of a genuine conflict between two values if they were mediated by the human good. The most obvious way the human good could mediate between conflicting values is if these values were *parts* of the human good. But in this case, it seems the conflict would be only apparent rather than genuine, unless we hold that the human good is itself disunified. I find this unlikely. This said, I do not argue that it is impossible for an account which takes the externalist strategy to find success.

Consider again the *internalist* strategy: it denies the possibility of genuine conflict between morality and other reasons; any conflict is merely apparent. I noted in the introduction that this presupposes some degree of sensitivity of morality and other values to each other. In this vein, I argued in the first chapter that Smith's internalist constitutivist account of what we owe to each other fails to leave space for friendship. This was due to the fact that Smith's account places undue weight on our interests in promoting and protecting our capacities for knowledge acquisition and desire realization, without building in any sensitivity to the agent's own pursuits. In this case, those reasons relating to the promotion of these capacities in all other agents would always outweigh any other interests we have, including those of benefiting or spending time with our friends.

I also suggested in the first chapter that it would be hard for any moral metaethical constitutivist to ensure that a good agent could also be a good friend. After all, if the constitutivist's project is to analyze what is constitutive of action at all, then the constitutivist must just find that recognizably moral principles are constitutive of agency, and just find that they are sensitive to or compatible with friendship. Either agency is structured such that morality and friendship are constitutive of it, or it isn't. But since agency is not theoretically restricted to humans – there could be nonhuman agents and God would presumably be the *ur*-agent – and friendship is a *human* value, there appears to be no reason to suppose that friendship is found within the constitutive conditions of agency. Thus, I think constitutivism is unlikely to find success from either the internalist or externalist strategy.

In the second chapter, I considered Scanlon's contractualism. Scanlon's account is a more promising internalist account for two reasons: it aims to preserve the compatibility of morality and friendship and it need not simply find this compatibility from an analysis of a rational

capacity. Nonetheless, I argued that Scanlon's contractualism fails to capture this compatibility. Scanlon defends a conception of friendship that is built upon the claims of morality, so it is hard to see how he could successfully realize the internalist mechanism by which moral reasons are sensitive to those of friendship. Accordingly, I argued, Scanlon's claims of compatibility pay merely lip service to accommodating space for good agents to be good "friends" too. His contractualism does not generate permissions to act on reasons of friendship within the appropriate scope of cases.

If all this is right, then some major contemporary normative ethical theories are susceptible to the burdensomeness objection. Failing to find success here, I turned in the third chapter to Aristotle, whose human-centered account of normativity has promising resources for meeting my charge. As I have noted, the claim that Aristotle's ethics can obviously overcome the burdensomeness objection is premature. Adherence to a certain popular contemporary conception of character friendship, the defining feature of which is the agent's own virtuous development, would saddle the neo-Aristotelian with the same problem as Scanlon: the form of friendship protected would be phenomenologically inadequate, insofar as it would fail to generate reasons of friendship across the range of cases in which we think there are such reasons. To remedy this, I argued for a novel conception of Aristotelian character friendship, the defining feature of which is just to wish the other well for her own sake, or for herself. This conception, I argued, is both plausible and adequate. Accordingly, adherence to it paves the way towards proving that Aristotle's ethics can overcome my charge.

But a question remains about which strategy the Aristotelian virtue ethicist can take after establishing that her conception of character friendship is a good one. I stated in the Introduction

that I will argue it is internalist; I will do this now. I begin by defusing a potential argument that Aristotle's account is externalist before giving more decisive evidence that it is internalist.

First, note that if Aristotle's account is internalist, then there can be no possibility of genuine conflict between the reasons recommended by the virtues of justice and friendship. Against this, one might point out that Aristotle seems open to considering such conflicts. In *NE* IX, he notes that justice requires paying back one's creditors, but questions whether, if one's father is in need, one can skimp on the claim of justice and benefit one's father instead.[163,164] Aristotle's question here does not seem to be one about whether justice in fact requires paying back one's creditor; it is a question about what, in virtue of the claim of justice and the putative claim of friendship, one should do.

I deny this, however; it is only an apparent conflict. I agree with modern virtue ethicists like Annas and Rosalind Hursthouse that full consideration of any apparent conflict shows that the discrete virtues do not in fact issue reasons to do incompatible things.[165] It may *seem* as though justice and friendship conflict if you think that justice requires paying back one's debts come what may. But a proper consideration of the nuances of taking credit may enlighten you as to why, in this instance, you may benefit your father rather than repay your debt (if that is indeed true in this case). The reason that the conflict is only apparent is that the virtues constitute a unity. All the discrete virtues (Aristotle notes that friendship either is a virtue or else involves

[163] Aristotle notes that "for the most part" we must pay back our creditors rather than loan to our friends (*NE* 1164b33). He later claims that "generally the debt should be paid, but if the gift is exceedingly noble or exceedingly necessary, one should defer to these considerations" (*NE* 1165a3-5). Note that in Aristotle's designed case, the issue is specifically whether you should, if ransomed, ransom your ransomer (repay debt) or ransom your father if both your ransomer and father remain in the hands of brigands.

[164] While this may seem irrelevant to our discussion about friendship, note that familial relations are treated by Aristotle in the same vein as friendship. See *NE* VIII.12 in particular.

[165] See Hursthouse (1999), chapter 2 and Annas (2011), chapter 6.

virtue) are discrete in only a limited sense because they also constitute a whole: the good human life. Since there is a unity, the virtues should not offer conflicting reasons.

Let me explain briefly how this sensitivity between discrete virtues might work. If we take Aristotle seriously that virtue just is excellent human functioning, which comprises a unity, then any particular virtue named from the whole will be like a sector within a circle. It is discrete insofar as it has its own defining and characteristic properties which it perhaps shares with no other sector. But it remains a part of a whole; its boundaries must be set by its relations to the other parts. Each virtue is shaped by, or sensitive to, every other. The result is that there is no conflict between the virtues. So, I think it is plausible that Aristotelian virtue ethics is internalist. I also believe it has more promising resources than the contemporary views I considered in the first and second chapters. To show this, it will be instructive to consider how it avoids each of the pitfalls that the other views suffer.

First, recall Korsgaard's problem. As a constitutivist, Korsgaard finds morality within the constitutive conditions of agency. As an externalist, she notes that non-moral values can present genuine conflicts with whatever is required by morality and aims to allow that those moral obligations do not always win out. But the issue, I argued, is that if normativity is sourced in agency – which is identical to morality – and friendship is external to agency, then it is hard to see how friendship could ever win out. How could there be reason to *act* if that act is in tension with the constitutive reasons of agency?

Aristotelian ethics avoids this issue insofar as its source of normativity is the human good, which is not identified with only justice. Justice is not the only value constitutive of the human good; friendship is, too. While it leads to an abandonment of externalism, the leg up is clear: there is a means of balancing the reasons of justice and friendship that reduces any conflict to a

merely *prima facie* conflict. The demands don't actually pull in different directions: they are tempered by their shared source, the human good, which constitutes a unity. We see, then, that Aristotelian ethics does not have the problems Korsgaard does with finding an external means of arbitrating two competing sources of normativity.

Second, recall Smith's problem. As a constitutivist, he begins with a conception of agency and shows how morality falls out of it. As an internalist, he claims that there is no genuine conflict between moral and non-moral reasons. So, if there is a conflict between a moral reason of agency and some other reason, it follows from the conjunction of internalism and constitutivism that the other reason is only apparent. As I have noted, there is no reason to expect that what is constitutive of agency will be sensitive to specifically human values. So, it is highly likely that an internalist constitutivist account is susceptible to the burdensomeness objection.

Aristotelian ethics avoids this insofar as it begins not with what it is to be a good agent but with what it is to be a good *human*. As noted above, not only justice is partly constitutive of the source of normativity; so too is friendship. So, Aristotelian ethics has a clear leg up in this case, too – both of these important values are found within the same source of reasons. We need not worry that one will invariably trump the other.

We are now ready to see that Scanlon's problem is nearest to potential worries about Aristotelian ethics. We saw that Scanlon's version of internalism claims that friendship and morality are mutually determined, so that even though morality always takes priority, it will not stifle our reasons of friendship. Scanlon's problem, I argued, is that he shows primarily that friendship is constrained by morality, with the result that it becomes very hard to see how friendship could partly determine the demands of morality. The problem, then, is that the version

of friendship Scanlon advances is already too watered-down; this 'friendship' is protected, but it does not amount to the meaningful form of friendship that is necessary for a good human life.

Aristotelian ethics can avoid this complication in two ways. First, it can adopt a plausible and adequate form of friendship. Second, it can cash out the sensitivity among the discrete virtues in a principled and attractive way. I will explain these claims.

First, as I argued in the third chapter, it is important to show that Aristotle's conception of friendship is not a watered-down form that is overly concerned with self-improvement. Rather, it is a form of friendship defined around taking the good of your friend as reason-giving. And while it is your friend's virtue that is the object of your love in character friendship, promotion and noninterference with virtue does not exhaust the reasons you have with respect to your friend. Character friends are pleasurable and useful to each other, too, and this coincidence in relative goods gives each friend reasons with respect to the other's more idiosyncratic interests. For instance, despite being only relatively good, your friend's love of coffee and her interest in the skillful production of an excellent cup of coffee give you a reason to e.g. get her some beans that you've heard make an excellent cup of coffee. I argued that this amounts to the rich conception of friendship necessary for a good life; and now suggest that it is sufficiently substantive that it is not hard to see how it could *prima facie* conflict with some reason of justice.

Second, recall that the object of your love is the virtue of your friend. Your friend's virtue is the activity and realization of human flourishing. This is why friendship is or involves virtue, for Aristotle: no one would choose a life without friends. So, somehow friendship factors into a flourishing human life, and therefore into virtue.[166] So too, of course, does justice. They are both

[166] I say "somehow" because the details of whether friendship *is* or merely *involves* (and if "involves" is the right relation, what that amounts to) is outside the scope of this dissertation.

constitutive parts of the same whole – the human good. As we saw above in how Aristotelian ethics avoids Korsgaard's and Smith's difficulties, this finding of normativity in a specifically human good will help to ensure a plausible arbitration between the claims of justice and friendship. We saw a sketch of how this applies when considering whether one must pay back one's creditors or offer credit to one's friend in need: unless one's friend is in truly great need, one must pay back one's creditor. What arbitrates between this *prima facie* conflict of reasons is the human good: one must consider which action would be more noble (as Aristotle would put it) for oneself, or which action best realizes (or manifests, or constitutes) one's own human good.

So, I have sketched that Aristotelian ethics has a means of adjudicating potential conflicts between discrete values. Let me now sketch a vindication of the claim that these virtues are in fact discrete. The discreteness of the virtues is necessary to show that they can mutually determine each other in a meaningful way.

Discrete virtues, I claim, correspond to the recognizably distinct elements of a good human life. They are distinct modes of virtue that can be identified by their defining features. Consider the distinctness of the virtues of justice and courage. The defining feature of justice, according to Aristotle, is taking only one's fair share and giving others their due. The defining feature of courage, on the other hand, is facing and fearing the right things from the right motive at the right time and in the right way. While they share similarities – their proportionality, aim at the noble, and so on – they are not equivalent. Friendship also has its own defining feature, as I argued in the third chapter: wishing well to your friend for her own sake, or for herself. This cannot be reduced to any other virtue. We thus see that the virtues can be distinguished from each other by their unique defining features. While they constitute the same final end – *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing – there are discrete elements of this end.

In sum, the path forward for Aristotelian ethics is something like the following. The content of the distinct virtues mutually determines the boundaries of each virtue, and what arbitrates this mutual determination is the *human* good. What is wanting, of course, are the details to fill in how this would work out. But this seems like a sufficiently satisfying outline of how Aristotelian ethics could deliver on the internalist strategy.

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