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Valuable Asymmetrical Friendships

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Abstract
Aristotle distinguishes friendships of pleasure or utility from more valuable 'character friendships' in which the friend cares for the other *qua* person for the other's own sake. Aristotle and some neo-Aristotelians require such friends to be fairly strictly symmetrical in their separateness of identity from each other, in the degree to which they identify with each other, and in the degree to which they are virtuous. We argue that there is a neglected form of valuable friendship – neither of pleasure nor utility – that allows significant asymmetries. We know of no sustained discussion of such 'asymmetrical' friendships in the literature.

1. Introduction

In his discussion of friendship in Books 8 and 9 of the *Nicomachaean Ethics* (*EN*), Aristotle distinguishes three sorts of friendship. These include friendships of pleasure or of utility, in which the friend takes the other – even as an object of care – as a person *qua* bearer of characteristics conducive to pleasure or utility such as 'witty raconteur' or 'handy contact'.[1] Then there are much more valuable – indeed morally valuable – friendships in which the friend cares for the other *qua* person for the other's own sake. Let us call these 'character friendships'.[2] These are held by Aristotle and a variety of neo-

[1] The key passage here is *EN* 1156a14–19. J. M. Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship', *Review of Metaphysics* **30** (1977a), 619–648, argues that even in friendships of utility and pleasure there is still a sense in which one cares for the friend for her own sake. Cooper draws heavily on the interpretation of *EN* 155b29–31 where Aristotle states that 'friends must be well disposed towards each other, and recognized as wishing each other good, for one of the three reasons…' namely pleasure, utility or virtue. The passage is, of course, ambiguous. Nonetheless this view is echoed by others including Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 124–125. We maintain that even in these cases the sense in which one cares for the other for her own sake is defined primarily by the source of the friendship in utility or pleasure. See the discussion in A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 103–106.

[2] Aristotle also calls character friendship 'perfect friendship' (*EN* 1156b–10). Contemporary followers of Aristotle or 'neo-Aristotelians' call

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Aristotelians[3] to involve various fairly strict equalities, or as we prefer to put it, *symmetries* between the friends.[4] Roughly, such friends are fairly strictly symmetrical in terms of their separateness of identity from each other, fairly strictly symmetrical in the degree to which they identify with each other, and are fairly strictly symmetrical in the degree to which they are virtuous.[5]

We think that there is a fourth important sort of friendship that has received scant attention in the philosophical literature. We call this *asymmetrical friendship*. This is not friendship of pleasure or of utility, being much more valuable. Like character friendships but unlike friendships of pleasure or utility – that may also be asymmetrical in the ways we have just sketched – these involve each friend caring for the other for the others' own sake. Unlike character friendships, they need not exhibit any of the symmetries to a significant degree. Indeed we will argue that these friendships allow significant asymmetries, yet appear especially valuable to us in the phenomenology of our lives. Thus they are unlike Aristotle's symmetrical and certainly valuable character friendships that seldom appear at all in our imperfect lives, lived as they are in an imperfect world. We know of no sustained discussion of such friendships in the literature.

It is however worth noting that Aristotle in his highly nuanced account of friendship does allow that asymmetrical friendships of a

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it 'friendship of the highest kind', 'character friendship', 'end friendship', 'virtue friendship', 'best case of friendship' or 'perfect friendship'. On 'end friendship' see N. K. Badhwar, 'Why it is Wrong to be Always Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship', *Ethics* **101** (1991), 483ff. On 'best case of friendship' see M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 356ff. On 'friendships of the best sort' see J. M. Cooper, 'Friendship and the Good in Aristotle', *Philosophical Review* **86** (1977b), 298ff. On 'perfect friendship' see Price 1989, op. cit., 103–130. On 'character friendship' see Sherman 2004, op. cit., 119–156 and Cooper 1977a, op. cit., 624ff.

[3] By 'neo-Aristotelians' we do not mean that these writers are necessarily Aristotelians in a broad sense. We merely mean that on the topic of friendship they are influenced by Aristotle's views even when Aristotle is not explicitly cited. For example, Sherman 2004, op. cit., may plausibly be viewed as much more influenced by Stoicism than Aristotle. Nonetheless, she follows Aristotle closely in her views on friendship.

[4] We prefer this term because 'equality' has overtones in political philosophy that we need not engage.

[5] We are not saying that all those who broadly follow Aristotle's account of friendship endorse *all* of these symmetries.

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certain sort exist between father and son, parent and child, husband and wife, older man and younger, teacher and pupil, and even *erastês* and *erômenos*, as well as ruler and subject but adds that in '… these friendships between persons of different standing the affection must be proportionate: i.e. the better person must be loved more than he loves, and so must the more useful….' (*EN* 1158b).[6] Nonetheless, he maintains, and this is crucial, a very high degree of inequality *precludes* friendship '… as between God and man, friendship becomes impossible' (*EN* 1159a). Such friendships are not character friendships in Aristotle's sense. Aristotle also stresses at several points the 'similarity' between character friends. See, for example, *EN* 1156b.

Aristotle and the neo-Aristotelian tradition hold the thesis that:

character friends have identities more or less[7] *equally separate in relation to each other*.

We call this *symmetry of separateness of self*. This is the thesis that despite identifying with each other, the friends still remain separate selves roughly to the same degree.[8] While Aristotle does not use a Greek cognate of 'autonomy' but rather the term *autarkia*, to be read as 'self-sufficiency', this is one fairly standard way in which neo-Aristotelians have accepted some sense of the relationship between separateness of self and autonomy.[9] This is the idea that in

[6] Aristotle's account of inequality in friendships of the sorts under discussion betrays an interesting tension. On the one hand, such friendships require some sort of process of 'equalisation' between the unequals that enables such friends to be named friends. On the other hand, 'benefactors' – the superior parties in an unequal friendship – 'like fathers with their children cherish the objects of their benefaction more than the objects themselves' (*EN* 1167b–1168a). For an interesting and fuller discussion of the relation between unequal friends, the process of equalisation and its tensions with Aristotle's account of justice, see M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 91–114. Ultimately Pakaluk seems to agree with our position.

[7] We add 'more or less' here to capture Aristotle's nuanced discussion of inequality in friendship (*EN* 1158b–1159a).

[8] See Price 1989, op. cit., particularly 110–114 and 164–165, Cooper 1977a, op. cit., particularly his interpretation of Aristotle's account of 'friends without qualification' (*EN* 1157b4), 632ff and Sherman 2004, op. cit., particularly 138–144.

[9] This is, of course, a controversial claim when attributed to Aristotle. Autonomy, as it is usually thought of, is associated with the Enlightenment, in particular, Kant, and then in the liberal political tradition. Nonetheless

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order to be a separate self, one must exercise sufficient autonomy with respect to oneself, as well as symmetrically in relation to character friends.

It may be objected that what is central to the Aristotelian account of character friendship in its relation to separateness of self, autonomy and self-sufficiency is a dynamic directedness towards common goals both internal and external to the activities of the friends. We do not deny this. However we will argue that in valuable asymmetrical friendships, the dynamic dimension of the relationship and the shared goals are likely not to extend beyond the ineradicable particularity of the relationship.

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there are grounds for attributing to Aristotle some version of autonomy. A robust interpretation of Aristotelian autonomy with many similarities to Kant can be found in Aristotle's discussions of *autarkia* (self-sufficiency) *EN* 1097a24–b21 and 1177a12–1177b4 where self-sufficiency is associated with the highest activity for humans - contemplation; 1179a1–9. Also see *Politics* 1256a1–56b26. A very strong sense of autonomous self-sufficiency is attributed to Aristotle by A. W. H. Adkins, '"Friendship" and "Self-Sufficiency" in Homer and Aristotle', *The Classical Quarterly* **13**, (1963), 30–45. Alternative interpretations of Aristotelian autonomy are possible. See for example, J. Oakley, 'Aristotelian Autonomy', in C. Martin (ed.), *Bioethics and the Wider Community: Proceedings of Australian Bioethics Association First National Conference*, Melbourne, 237–245. For some discussions of the relations between separateness of self, self-sufficiency and autonomy see for example D. B. Annis, 'The Meaning, Value, and Duties of Friendship', *American Philosophical Quarterly* **24** (1987), 349–356, particularly 353–357, where autonomy is stressed as a source of duties in friendship, N. K. Badhwar, *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), particularly 4, where she emphasizes the particularity of the parties to a friendship, N. K. Badhwar, 'Friendship, Justice and Supererogation', *American Philosophical Quarterly* **22** (1985), 126–129, particularly the discussion of resentment and forgiveness with its implications for strong autonomy, Badhwar 1991, op. cit., 499ff, where she argues that autonomy is a necessary feature of friendship, Cooper 1977a op. cit., particularly 634 and the discussion of civic friendship, 645ff, and Cooper 1977b, op. cit., where 'more or less' mutual autonomy seems to be a requirement of the friend as second self in achieving self-knowledge and the knowledge required for 'shared activity', Nussbaum 1986, op. cit., particularly 362–363 where she interprets the reciprocal autonomy of friends via the 'mechanisms' of advice and correction, shared activity and emulation and imitation, and Sherman 2004, op. cit., particularly 138–144, where relational autonomy is distinguished from Kantian autonomy but seen as necessary for friendship and flourishing.

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Aristotle and neo-Aristotelians also hold the thesis that:

character friends identify with each other roughly to the same degree.[10]

We call this *symmetry of second self*.[11]

The tradition also holds a third symmetry, namely that:

in character friendships, the friends are roughly equally as virtuous.

We call this thesis *symmetry of virtue*. Almost all writers on friendship take this for granted.[12] The tradition also has it that character

[10] Contemporary discussions of what we call 'symmetry of second self' do not use this terminology though we suggest it is implied in them. L. Thomas in 'Friendship', *Synthese* **72** (1987), 217–236, and 'Friends and Lovers', in G. Graham and H. LaFollette (eds) *Person to Person* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 182–198, discusses this in respect to self-disclosure, intimacy and trust, arguing that this form of identity is what distinguishes deeper friendships from mere acquaintances. This position is echoed in Annis 1987, op. cit., particularly 349–350. E. Telfer, 'Friendship', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **71** (1970), 227ff, presents the idea in terms of 'bonding' and 'solidarity'. A similar theme is explored in R J. White, *Love's Philosophy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), where sharing of values is explicitly related to identification with both friends. Stronger forms of second-self identification are explored in E. Millgram, 'Aristotle on Making Other Selves', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* **17** (1987), 61–76 and M. Friedman, 'Romantic Love and Personal Autonomy', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* **22** (1998), 162–181. Perhaps the strongest proponent of symmetry of second-self is Sherman 2004, op. cit., 132–136, where she talks of character friends as having a singleness of mind.

[11] Clearly this is not Aristotelian language. Nonetheless it captures aspects of Aristotle's notion of the friend as 'another self' and 'another me' (*Magna Moralia* 1213a13 and 1213a24). Variations on this terminology occur at *EN* 1170b7 and the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) 245a30. While this makes the case for friends identifying with each other, Aristotle is also concerned to highlight the separateness of the friends. See *EE* 1245a35 and his discussion of the importance of self-love at *EN* 1168b28–1169a3 and 1169b1. Further evidence for the separateness of selves requirement may be found at *EN* 1245a30–4 and 1172a10–15 and in his discussions of self-knowledge at *EN* IX.9 and *EE* VII.12.

[12] See B. Helm, 'Friendship', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2009) for a survey. An exception is Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*, for example, I–II, q. 40a70ff) who despite following Aristotle closely on human friendships nonetheless allows for friendship between human beings and God, thus in this special case denying all these symmetries.

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friendship is a reciprocated and chosen relationship that is acknowledged as such by both friends.[13]

Yet in the phenomenology of our everyday lives, a range of friendships that are neither friendships of pleasure nor utility appear to us as valuable yet are significantly *asymmetrical* in separateness of identity, degree of identification with each other as second selves or in virtue. These include friendships between pupils and their teachers, patients and their doctors, good people and bad, as well as short-lived friendships[14] forged through crises. The symmetries are not necessities of these valuable friendships, even if they are norms – as we will argue.

We will not attempt a full analysis of the nature of friendship. Instead in §2 we summarize Aristotle's account of friendship, in order to provide the background for our own inquiry and to indicate where and why we diverge from Aristotle and those who broadly follow his lead on friendship. While we give a somewhat detailed exegesis of the major lines of Aristotle's thinking on character friendship and show how they have been appropriated in contemporary discussions in moral philosophy on friendship, we do not intend this paper to be primarily an historical piece. In §3 we present examples of valuable friendships that do not require significant symmetry of separateness of self. We also argue that while valuable friendship demands a degree of separateness of identity, it does not demand *significant* symmetry of separateness of identity. In §4 we first examine Aristotle's discussion of friendship with bad people (between the bad and the bad and between the good and the bad) and then present examples of valuable friendships between the good and the bad that do not require significant symmetry of virtue or other features of Aristotle's account that he thinks are needed for character friendship. Throughout our paper we treat such examples as narratives about putative friendships. In this respect we share the method of neo-Aristotelians whom we think have neglected valuable asymmetrical friendships.[15]

[13] See *EE* 1236b3–6 on *antiprohairesis* (reciprocal choice) as we discuss in §2 and §4. Although this is not the main target of our critique here, we shall in passing allude to valuable asymmetrical friendships that are not clearly chosen and tentatively present a limiting case of a valuable asymmetrical friendship that may not be reciprocated.

[14] Again although this is not the specific focus of our critique, we present a tentative case for a valuable symmetrical friendship that may be short-lived.

[15] Much of the contemporary philosophical literature on friendship trades on example and counterexample. See for example, D. Cocking and

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2. Aristotle on friendship, virtue, selfhood and autonomy

Aristotle tells us that character friends are 'the greatest of external goods' (*EN* 1169b10) and that character friendship is 'most necessary for life' (*EN* 1155a4). He means that such friendship is needed for a good flourishing life because although friendship is an instrumental good in that friends help us achieve other goods such as play and conversation, it is also intrinsically *kalon* ('fine', 'beautiful') because it would remain a good even if it did not help us achieve other goods (*EN* 1155a28–32).

Secondly, he argues that character friendship is necessarily reciprocal - one is a friend of another only if the other is a friend of one (*EN* 1155b27–31).[16] Aristotle is guided by what we *normally say* when we talk of friendship and so holds that friendship requires an acknowledged reciprocation of affection and benefits.[17]

J. Kennett, 'Friendship and Moral Danger', *The Journal of Philosophy* **97** (1998), 278–296 and 'Friendship and the Self', *Ethics* **108** (2000), 502–527.

[16] This contradicts a suggestion of Plato in the aporetic dialogue *Lysis*. There Plato elucidates the logical grammar of *philia* as a relation with three *relata*. These are a befriender who is animated to befriend due to ontological *endeia* (the lack of what the befriender needs to complete her nature) a befriended (that is loved because of some attractive good perceived by the befriender) and a set of activities typical of the relation. See T. B. Mooney, 'Plato's Theory of Love in the *Lysis*: A Defence', *Irish Philosophical Journal* **7** (1990), 131–160, 'The Dialectical Interchange between Agathon and Socrates: *Symposium* 198b–201d', *Antichthon* **28** (1994), 16–24, and 'Plato and the Love of Individuals', *The Heythrop Journal* **43** (2002), 311–327. Because the set of activities is only typical, *philia* may exist in its absence. So if a wine-lover is unable to drink wine, he may still be a friend of wine, although the wine is no friend of the wine-lover. Plato's discussion depends on a much wider range of meanings of '*philia*' than 'friendship' captures, one of which is that something is held dear. Moreover '*philein*' can be an active or passive verb. See J. M. Cooper, 'Aristotle on Friendship', in A. O. Rorty, (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 301–302, G. Vlastos, 'The Individual as Object of Love in Plato', *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3–42, and D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[17] On the methodological importance of what is generally 'said' (*ta legomena*) and its corollary, the 'appearances' (*phainomena*) in Aristotle, see Nussbaum 1986, op. cit., 240–263.

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Thirdly, Aristotle holds that while a friend is a *second* or *expanded* self the friend is still a *separate* self.[18] Aristotle claims only that while one identifies with the friend to a significant degree one's self still remains largely separate.[19]

On the one hand, Aristotle holds that the friend is 'another self' (*allos autos*) because friends are symmetrically virtuous, are embedded in each other's lives, understand each other in privileged ways, jointly deliberate on choices, live together and share each other's joys and woes (*EN* 1170b7 and *Magna Moralia* 1213a13 and 1213a24).[20]

On the other hand, Aristotle thinks that friendships require self-love and hence separateness of identity:

> The origins of relations of friendship towards our neighbours, and of the characteristics by which we distinguish the various kinds of friendship, seem to be our relations to ourselves (*EN* 1166a) … for being is a good to the good person, and each person wishes for what is good for himself; and no one chooses to have everything if he has first to become someone else … but only if he remains whatever he is. And each person would seem to be the intellectual part (*noûs*), or primarily this (*EN* 1166a).

Here Aristotle thinks of self-love as both an origin of, and a necessary condition for, friendship. Part of his argument is that nobody desires what would change one into someone else, for then it would not be one's self whose desire is satisfied. So good persons who love their good friends, cherish their own lives, and in wanting what is good for the friend, cherish their own identity.

Aristotle's argument is restricted to good people. It is plausible that the love required by friendship both originates in and requires self-love, because in continuing to give oneself to the other as an act of love, one does so for the good of the other. But one could not do so unless one saw one's self largely as a good, worthy of love. Thus too little self-love precludes friendship. Too much self-love also

[18] See Sherman 2004, op. cit., 128–136 and n. 10.

[19] Sherman 2004, op. cit., Telfer 1970, op. cit., and White, op. cit., 2001, hold that one must identify strongly with a friend while Annis 1987, op. cit., Friedman 1998, op. cit., and Thomas 1987, op. cit., only require weaker forms of identification.

[20] Debate still rages over the authenticity of Aristotle's authorship of the *Magna Moralia*. We think that its treatment of friendship is consistent with what Aristotle has to say on friendship in his canonical works.

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precludes it, because one could not accept the other's gift of herself as worthy of love if one loved only oneself. Since one must love oneself in loving a friend, one needs to see oneself as sufficiently separate from the self of the friend, as a separate good to be cultivated, in order to be offered to the friend.[21]

Aristotle's requirement of symmetry of second self in character friendship supports his requirement of symmetry of separateness of self. Aristotle makes this point most clearly in his discussion of the impossibility of friendship between masters and slaves. Aristotle argues that because the master sees the slave as an extrinsic good for himself, like a commodity, he cannot see the slave's self as an extension of his own self (*EN* 1161b). So he can see nothing of himself in the slave *qua* slave.[22]

A fourth condition is that the character friends wish each other well *for the other's own sake*, and not just for the pleasure or benefit that the relationship provides. A fifth condition is that both *acknowledge* this (*EN* 1155b27–1156a5).[23]

[21] For good discussions of self-love in Aristotle see J. Annas, 'Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism', *Mind* **86** (1977), 532–554 and C. H. Kahn, 'Aristotle and Altruism', *Mind* **90** (1981), 20–40. Aristotle's position on self-love and the identification of the true self as coinciding with *noûs* (*EN* 1116a) make his account of friendship much closer to Plato's than is usually thought. See Mooney 1990, op. cit., particularly the discussion of the 'fugitive self' in respect to *to oikeion*, 154–155.

[22] Aristotle's endorsement of symmetry of autonomy does not appear to be supported by the requirement of separateness of self. The commodification of the slave may be compatible with the recognition that the slave has a distinct self. The pleasure that a sadistic master gets from working his slave to death is parasitic on this recognition. Against Aristotle, character friendship between masters and slaves seems to have been thought possible in early Islam. See A. Ghosh, *In an Antique Land* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Perhaps Aristotle was thinking along these lines when he entertains the possibility that master and slave might be friends of a sort *qua* humans (*EN* 116b ff).

[23] However, it might be argued that unreciprocated, unacknowledged friendship is possible. Imagine a person who continues to protect the good of another for that other's own sake but conceals his identity from the other as the source of such care, perhaps because of the political danger or social stigma of doing so. This is a theme of Jeffrey Archer's popular novel *Kane and Abel* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1979). Aristotle would call this goodwill and distinguishes it from friendship (*EN* 1155d–1156a). It might be objected that this person is not a friend of the other, but rather desires to exercise friendly acts, dispositions and

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At this point Aristotle distinguishes the *motivating grounds* (*dia*), the *objects* and the *goals* (*tele*) of friendship. The motivating grounds are sources of attraction to the friend. They include pleasure, utility and virtuous character. This explains why character friendships may, but need not, originate in less valuable friendships of pleasure or utility. A fourth motivating ground is our disposition to form friendships that arises from our embeddedness in social organizations such as professional associations but most particularly for Aristotle, the family.[24] One most naturally comes to know one's good within the context of one's properly functioning family. Indeed, Aristotle thinks of friendships as natural extensions of familial friendships; the family is the unchosen ground of familial friendships, within which our values and dispositions are shaped, and these are the grounds of non-familial friendships. The *object* of the friendship is the person *qua* person (*kath'hauto*) – an independent separate self that is a centre of freedom and choice, and the *goals* of the relationship are shared activities.

Friendship among good people of symmetrical virtue is not just intrinsically fine but also instrumentally good. Because each friend sees herself in the other, they provide each other with a 'mirror' (*Magna Moralia* 1213a22) by means of which both can develop self-knowledge. Because each friend is virtuous, this helps foster the development of good character and aspirations. Each may provide advice and correction to the other, as well as influencing each other in shared activities and through emulation and imitation (*EN* 1172a, *ff*). This is instrumentally valuable in assisting projects, providing enjoyment and sustenance, increasing self-knowledge and improving self-perception (*Magna Moralia* 1213a10–26).

A final necessary condition of character friendship is trust because hypocrisy and 'falsity' – which includes deceit and insincerity – undermine love (*Rhetoric* 1381b33). Aristotle and his followers also argue that falsity undermines friendship because self-deception tells against one of the central benefits of friendship, namely self-knowledge.

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emotions. Although this case is certainly not a *norm* of friendship, it might still be thought to be a limiting case of it.

[24] This motivating ground of friendship has received very little discussion, perhaps because Aristotle's commitment to it is implicit. For an exception, see Price 1989, op. cit., 163–178.

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3. Friendships that are asymmetrical in separateness of identity and second self

In this section we will show that there is a class of valuable friendships that do not require significant symmetries of separateness of identity or second self.

In prosecuting our arguments for valuable friendships that are asymmetrical in respect to separate self, we start with the uncontroversial claim that typically in various *domains of life*, such as music, pastimes, medicine or politics, one party to a friendship has significantly more autonomy than the other. We use this to argue that Aristotle and neo-Aristotelians need to appeal to autonomy in order to support the symmetry of separate self thesis. We then discuss two ways in which asymmetry of separation of self is exhibited by one friend being more autonomous in certain domains than the other. These are that within certain domains, the more autonomous agent may direct or tell the lesser what to do, and that at a deeper level, the more autonomous agent *shapes the goals* of the lesser. We then argue that the shaping of goals is likely to go beyond certain domains in life. Finally, we extend and deepen the significance of the levels of the separate self thesis to allow for very significant asymmetries.

The arguments will also apply *mutatis mutandis* to the extension of second self thesis and to epistemological asymmetry. Preempting the arguments to come, consider the following illustrative example. Suppose that the more autonomous friend has helped the other shape her goals in a significant domain of life. Since a significant dimension of identity is involved in the shaping, this will likely spill over into other domains of life, in terms of shaping of goals and influencing behaviour that stems from goals. For example, if one is shaped to pursue a passion in music, one is most likely to make other domains of life, such as chess, take second place, with the result that one's chess friends become less central to one's life.

Against Aristotle and his followers, we think that separateness of identity and the extent to which one can be a second self, come in degrees. In respect to separateness of identity, consider autonomy. One of the ways in which one displays one's separateness of identity is through the exercise of one's autonomy. One may be autonomous in relation to another to the *degree* that the other does not influence what one does, and to the *degree* that she does not shape one's goals.

In respect to extension of second self, consider Helen's friendship with Patrick. Helen thinks of herself as incomplete without him, and identifies strongly with most of his joys, sorrows, goals and values.

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Unfortunately, although Patrick reciprocates this attitude, he does not do so to the same extent or in the same ways. This establishes asymmetry of second self as well as asymmetry of separateness of identity, since Helen's self is subsumed in Patrick's but not *vice versa*. Patrick however holds freedom to be sacrosanct so he is deliberately careful not to tell her what to do or shape her goals. Nonetheless she is his closest friend. If this story is plausible, then it shows us that a genuine and valuable friendship can exist in which there are grave asymmetries of separateness of self and extension of second self.

A related difficulty for Aristotelian character friendship is what might be called 'epistemological asymmetry', in which one person knows much more of the other's identity than *vice versa*.[25] Epistemological asymmetry is related to asymmetry of autonomy and hence separateness of self, because if one person knows more about what makes the other tick (including her hopes, fears and desires, partly constitutive of her self) than *vice versa*, then she is better placed than the other to shape the other's goals. She is also better placed to influence the other's behaviour stemming from these goals.

We will now give three more examples of valuable friendships which are significantly asymmetrical in various ways. The first, of a friendship between an aspiring musician and a professional, shows that there can be valuable friendship without much symmetry of separate self. Our second example of a friendship between teacher and pupil shows that valuable friendship does not require much symmetry of separateness of identity or extension of second self. Our third example of a friendship between a doctor and patient also shows that friendship does not require much symmetry of separate self.

Consider Andrew, an accountant, who likes playing folk-guitar, although he is only a novice. In the course of playing in local pubs he meets Brendan, who is a professional. They discover that they share many likes and dislikes as well as the same sense of humor and form an attachment outside of the music scene. Andrew and Brendan hold each other in affection and care for each other as unique individuals. Consequently both are disposed to promote each other's flourishing for the other's own sake. When Brendan tells Andrew that he needs help with managing his finances Andrew is happy to supply it because he shares Brendan's belief

[25] See J. Kupfer, 'Can Parents and Children Be Friends?', *American Philosophical Quarterly* **27** (1990), 16–17.

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that this will improve his life. For the same reason, Brendan is happy to help Andrew develop his musicianship, although he is privately dubious that Andrew can ever fulfill his ambition of switching to a career in music. As we have told the story so far, Andrew and Brendan may enjoy a valuable friendship, one that is valuable partly because each cares for the other for the other's own sake and partly because such care is directed at promoting the flourishing of the other.

Now let us embellish the story. Andrew and Brendan are equall forthcoming about their lives, except that Andrew is reticent about his childhood, which was painful and abusive - thus the two are epistemologically asymmetrical. Moreover each is careful not to boss the other. The only times that Andrew tells Brendan what to do are when he advises him how to manage his money. The only times that Brendan tells Andrew what to do is when he instructs him in musicianship. We stipulate that these occasions are equally frequent and that the advice is equally gentle - thus equalizing autonomy in respect to influencing behaviour.

So far in our story, Andrew has more autonomy in relation to Brendan than *vice versa* in financial matters, and Brendan has more autonomy in relation to Andrew than *vice versa* inside the music scene - to the same degree. Now let us add a second embellishment. The first time that either shapes the other's goals is when Brendan gently convinces Andrew, for his own good, that although he can improve his musicianship significantly, he doesn't have what it takes to be a professional. It seems that all in all, Brendan is more autonomous than Andrew since he is actively shaping Andrew's goals and resulting behaviour. Our two embellishments do not seem to undermine our initial claim that Andrew and Brendan may enjoy a valuable friendship. In fact Brendan's advice may be valuable in being directed at promoting the flourishing of Andrew. Therefore asymmetry of autonomy, and as a result asymmetry of separate self, need not prevent a valuable friendship. Nor, as our example shows, does valuable friendship require epistemological symmetry.

It might be objected that what matters for friendship is not just that both friends *are in fact* equally autonomous, but also that they *see* themselves as equally autonomous.[26] But there is nothing in our example to prevent Andrew and Brendan from recognizing this *de facto* asymmetry without undermining their friendship.

For our second example, suppose that a philosopher shapes the philosophical views of his pupil and that as the pupil matures, she

[26] We thank Tim Dare for this observation.

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in turn shapes the philosophical views of her teacher. While the pupil–teacher relation is preserved, reciprocated affection may develop as a motivating reason for each to promote the welfare of each other, *qua* persons. Thus they may enjoy a valuable friendship.[27] This promotion of the other's welfare might involve a change in the other's philosophical goals that counts as a change in the identity of the other in the sense that the nature of the other, still separate self, changes. Suppose that the teacher shapes his pupil's philosophical goals more than *vice versa*. This asymmetry of autonomy, asymmetry of separate self and asymmetry of degree of extension of second self need not undermine the friendship, because the welfare of each that the other is disposed to promote also includes non-philosophical goods internal to the relationship. In this case the friendship not only persists despite the asymmetry but its value *partly accrues from it*, given that the teacher has the more valuable philosophical goals.[28]

Our third example involves a doctor and her male patient, whose relationship begins purely professionally. As a good doctor she is disposed to promote the well-being of her patient only *qua* patient. But professional interaction may lead to requited romantic love, and requited romantic love is at least consistent with valuable friendship. Indeed one might argue that requited romantic love *requires* friendship. Following Aristotle's appeal to the ordinary usage of language, although lovers may happily say 'We aren't *just* good friends', it would be very odd for them to say 'We love each other very much, but we're not friends'.[29]

Once lovers however, the doctor still has, *qua* doctor, more autonomy with respect to her friend and lover, and rightly so. We are free to stipulate that apart from medical matters, each influences the other to an equal extent including the shaping of each other's goals. Thus valuable friendship does not require symmetry of autonomy and hence does not require symmetry of separate self.

[27] Indeed the ancient and medieval worlds hold the teacher-pupil relation as a paradigm of friendship. See B. P. Maguire, *Friendship and Community* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988), and J. J. McEvoy, 'Friendship and Love', *Irish Theological Quarterly* **50** (1984), 35–47.

[28] Indeed the friendship between pupil and teacher may exhibit all the asymmetries we discuss to significant degrees.

[29] L. Thomas, 'Friendships and Other Loves', in Badhwar, 1993, op. cit., 59, goes further to deny that '… there is a deep formal difference between friendship and romantic love…'

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The fact that requited romantic love is consistent with friendship is another reason why epistemological asymmetry does not preclude friendship. In some respects, a lover may know one better than one knows oneself, and lovers may be valuable friends.

It might be objected that these examples do not decisively establish that valuable friendships may be asymmetrical, since the friendships we exemplify are separable from the context of the professional roles. Thus the relationship is asymmetrical only insofar as the professional roles are asymmetrical.

We reply that friends may remain friends even while occupying their professional roles. Thus the friendship exists despite the asymmetry. The attempt to divorce the professional roles from the rest of the lives of those that occupy them is simply unrealistic. To return to our last example, if the doctor has to treat her patient, this does nothing to prevent them from loving each other. Because the doctor and her patient are the particular persons they are, her personal love is inextricably entwined with her professional care. Indeed the exercise of her professional care would not have the particularly valuable character that it has, were it not exercised within the loving context of the friendship. And the fact that requited romantic love is involved partly explains why such a friendship appears so saliently valuable to us.

A second objection might be that our examples of valuable friendships are those in which the degree of relevant asymmetry is not very great. But we may tweak the examples to make the asymmetries significant. Suppose that Andrew's desire to be a musician is an all-consuming passion - it affects central dimensions of his life goals and orientations, and were he to abandon these goals, then his life would be significantly different. In this respect Brendan's asymmetrical autonomy in relation to Andrew translates into how Andrew sees himself and his life and hence has major implications for his separateness of self in relation to Brendan. In the case of the teacher we may suppose that his shaping of the pupil's philosophical goals amounts to the shaping of a life. Even when the pupil reaches a level of philosophical independence from the teacher and they are friends, the teacher's influence upon her philosophical life continues to be pervasive, thus entrenching major asymmetries of separateness of self and extension of second self.

To illustrate this point more generally, suppose that Kwame has led Akosua to adopt more of his goals than *vice versa*. Now Kwame has more separateness of identity than Akosua and indeed more extension of second self, because Akosua sees more of herself in Kwame than *vice versa*, in terms of Kwame's goals. In other words,

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ceteris paribus, more asymmetry of autonomy entails more asymmetry of separateness of identity and asymmetry of second self. Thus since Brendan's asymmetry of autonomy in relation to Andrew is significant, so is his separateness of identity and asymmetry of second self with respect to Andrew. In the case of the teacher, we are free to stipulate that the *ceteris paribus* clause is met, for example by supposing that, *apart* from their philosophical goals, the teacher and pupil continue to see as much of themselves in the other as *vice versa* throughout the duration of their relationship. This seems to do nothing to undermine their friendship, although it is asymmetrical in separateness of identity and extension of second self. Since the teacher has led his pupil to adopt more of his philosophical goals than *vice versa*, then *ceteris paribus*, the pupil sees more of herself in the teacher than *vice versa*. Since the teacher's asymmetry of autonomy in relation to his pupil is significant, so is his separateness of identity and asymmetry of second self with respect to his pupil.

In the case of the doctor and her patient and lover, we might suppose that he is afflicted by a long and serious illness with the result that for a significant amount of his life he loses autonomy in respect to her.

Thus while valuable friendship requires of both friends *a degree* of separateness of identity and *a degree* of extension of second self, it does not require *much* symmetry of separateness of identity, symmetry of extension of second self or epistemological equality. Nor does it demand much symmetry of autonomy.[30]

[30] Indeed an absence of autonomy is a typical feature of friendship. If one is not autonomous in relation to another, then the other is free to shape one's goals. In that case, one's choices, domains of interest – and with them one's activities – are open to direction by the other. Cocking and Kennett call this openness 'directedness' (1998, op. cit., 503–506 and 2000, op. cit., 283–287). Although directedness is an instrumental good of friendship, Cocking and Kennett are wrong to think that it is a 'constitutive feature' of friendship (1998, op. cit., 513). On the one hand, they seem to think that directedness applies equally to both friends. In that case both friends are equally free to shape the goals of the other, with resulting symmetry of autonomy. But we have already shown that this is not a necessary feature of valuable friendship. Directedness is not a sufficient condition of friendship either, since an acquaintance with a drug addict might lead to one's own addiction. In this case the addict shapes one's goals and one is open to such direction, yet the addict need be no friend. However, directedness is a *typical* feature of friendship, because friends are disposed to promote each other's welfare, and this welfare may include the other's activities and choices. In being so disposed, and also because friends tend to enjoy

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4. Friendship with the bad

In what follows we shall be primarily concerned with friendship between the good and the bad rather than between the bad and the bad. Nonetheless we will start with some of the claims Aristotle makes about both sorts of friendship.

At *EN* 1156b he writes:

> Complete friendship is that of good people, those who are alike in their virtue: they each alike wish good things to each other in so far as they are good in themselves. Those who wish good things to a friend for his own sake are friends most of all, since they are disposed in this way towards each other because of what they are, not for any incidental reason. So their friendship lasts as long as they are good, and virtue is an enduring thing. Each of them is good without qualification and good for his friend, since good people are both good without qualification and beneficial to each other.

This passage strikingly and repetitiously ('good without qualification') rules out friendship between the bad and between the good and the bad. Nevertheless, since '*philia*' embraces a wider range of attachments than is captured by 'friendship' and because Aristotle wants to do justice to our ordinary usage of language and thus thinks of '*philia*' as having analogical implications, he allows that the bad can indeed have a *certain sort* of friendship with each other.[31] Thus in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle holds that the bad

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each other's company, one is likely to come to see such activities and choices as *prima facie* goods for one's own life, and so engage in them. Moreover, in loving the friend, one loves oneself, and caring for oneself may involve spending time away from the friend in order to cultivate oneself (Cocking and Kennett 1998, op. cit., 502–527 and 2000, op. cit., 278–296). This is one reason why as friends develop in character, so too does their friendship. In cultivating oneself apart from the friend, one may well acquire an involvement with new activities that may later involve the friend. If, on the other hand, Cocking and Kennett are not committed to symmetrical directedness but merely to a symmetrical disposition to being directed by the other, then this too is undermined by our example of the teacher and his pupil, for the teacher is significantly less disposed to direction by the pupil than *vice versa*.

[31] The claim that Aristotle thinks of '*philia*' as having analogical implications is controversial. We cannot defend it here. See W. W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle's Analysis of Friendship', *Phronesis* **20** (1975), 51–62, R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif, *L'Ethique à Nicomaque* (Louvain: Publication

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may be friends with the bad, provided these are friendships of pleasure or utility, adding that '… *all men have some good in them* and so fit in with one another' (*EE* 1238a–b, our italics).

At *EN* 1165b Aristotle discusses asymmetries of virtue and false beliefs, suggesting that if a friend deceives one into thinking that he is loved for his character, then one has grounds for complaint. Nonetheless he tentatively allows for a friendship to be maintained once a good person becomes bad, thus seemingly tolerating an asymmetry of virtue. However, an end-point is reached

> … only when our friends have become incurably bad; for so long as they are capable of reform we are even more bound to help them morally than we should be to assist them financially, since character is a more valuable thing than wealth and has more to do with friendship.[32]

Aristotle also provides psychological insights into why the bad seek friendship of a sort.

> …bad men constantly seek the society of others and shun their own company, because when they are by themselves they recall much that was unpleasant in the past and anticipate the same in the future, whereas with other people they can forget. Moreover they feel no affection for themselves, because they have no lovable qualities. Hence such men do not enter into their own joys and sorrows, as there is civil war in their souls; one part of their nature, owing to depravity, is pained by abstinence from certain indulgences while another part is pleased by it…Thus a bad man appears to be devoid even of affection for

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Universitaires de Louvain, 1959), G. E. L. Owen, 'Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle' in I. During and G. E. L. Owen (eds), *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Goteborg: Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia, 1960), J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), and A. D. M. Walker, 'Aristotle's Account of Friendship in the "*Nicomachean Ethics*"', *Phronesis* **24** (1979), 180–196.

[32] There may appear to be a tension between Aristotle's account of friendships among the good and his account of friendships among the bad. This is because he appears to set up the ideal case of friends who are perfect in virtue in contrast to the case of friends who are completely bad. But we think that his treatment of these *limiting cases* should be read in the context of his discussion of *metameleia* as well as *EE* 1238a–b and also in the context of his remarks on disagreements, divisions of interest and interpretation in *EN* 1166b *ff*.

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himself, because he has nothing lovable in his nature. (*NE* 1166b)

Although Aristotle maintains that bad men are unlovable, he concedes that one part of their nature, or soul, is pleased by abstinence from bad indulgence. Since this kind of pleasure is good, Aristotle is committed to saying that they have some good in them. This coheres with his just-quoted remark that 'all men have some good in them and so fit in with one another' (*EE* 1238a–b).[33]

Aristotle's analysis of friendship is well nuanced. According to Cooper's influential reading, friendships of utility or pleasure are still to be counted as genuine friendships even if not as character friendships.[34] We agree with Cooper. They are analogically related to character friendships. We think that friendships of utility or pleasure are *also* those in which the friend takes the other – even as an object of care – as a person *qua* bearer of characteristics conducive to pleasure or utility as well. They also involve wishing the other well for her own sake, at least in some respects.[35] This explains why such friendships may be valuable despite being less valuable than character friendships.

Even in his discussion of character friendship Aristotle observes that although the character of good people is deeply formed, it is not immutable (*EN* 1162b–1163c). Accordingly, he observes that moral character may degenerate as well as improve.[36] Moreover, even friends with the best wills are subject to disagreements, divisions of interest and failures of interpretation (*EN* 1162b5ff, 1165a36ff, 1171a4–6, and *Rhetoric* 1381b). This implicitly recognizes that the good need not be completely good. As we have seen above (*EE* 1238a–b) he also holds that the bad need not be completely bad. This is confirmed by his observation that bad people are '…full of *metameleia*' (*EN* 1166b24–25), a term best read as 'remorse'.[37] Their

[33] See also our discussion below and note 32 on the importance of *metameleia*.

[34] Cooper 1979a, op. cit.

[35] The consensus of scholars to date overwhelmingly agrees with Cooper's analysis. For example, see Sherman 2004, op. cit., 124–125 and Thomas 1989, op. cit., 48.

[36] See *EN* 1165b and *Rhetoric* 1381b15.

[37] This is Aquinas's reading, as shown by his use of '*poenitentia replentur*' and '*dolent*'. See A. MacIntyre, 'The Bad and the Good in Friendships', in T. A. F. Kelly and P. W. Rosemann (eds.), *Amor Amicitiae: On the Love that is Friendship: Essays in Mediaeval Thought and Beyond in Honor of the Rev. Professor James McEvoy* (Leuven, Paris: Peeters Publishers, 2004),

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remorse entails a recognition of moral failure, perhaps even of a 'fugitive' self – roughly one that shies from itself in shame – and this recognition is a good.

If we accept the possibility that valuable friendship is available between the good – who are not completely good – and the bad – who are not completely bad – then we may do justice to our phenomenological experience of friendship, the fragility of the moral life, and the normative force of the ineradicable particularity of friendship. To defend this we now present examples that show, as overlooked by Aristotle and his followers, that (i) there may be valuable friendships between the good and the bad; (ii) friendship between the good and the bad might enable goods in a form of *practical reasonableness* particularly associated with the bad; (iii) certain goods of perceptiveness might be more readily available in a less than perfect world to someone who is less than perfect; (v) forms of deception or self-deception may be crucial both to friendship and to psychological health, and (vi) friendships may be morally inspirational - and so valuable - precisely because of their moral asymmetry.

(i) There may be valuable friendships between the good and the bad

Suppose that a largely law-abiding community contains a group of gangsters who engage in organized theft and drug-running. Nonetheless the gangsters are integrated in non-criminal, cultural ways into the community. They see themselves as a part of it, and have a special affection for it, despite the fact that they sometimes prey upon its members. Then the community is devastated by an earthquake, but the government is too incompetent and indifferent to provide medical treatment, shelter and food. Out of loyalty to the community the gangsters help out as best they can, using their logistics and their influence with government officials. One of them, Jose, is assigned the task of working with Pedro, an upright member of the community. Although Pedro is much more virtuous than Jose, he develops affection for Jose born of gratitude for his assistance in the crisis, and this leads Jose to reciprocate Pedro's affection. Then as Jose comes to know and like Pedro as an individual, he becomes disposed to further Pedro's welfare *simply because he is Pedro*.

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242. Some of the points raised in our discussion of friendship with the bad are echoed in MacIntyre's essay.

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Can Pedro be reciprocally disposed? Jose's life involves criminal activities that Pedro knows are immoral. Nonetheless, he might enter into a friendship with Jose *via* a sort of moral myopia: at the beginning, Pedro looks at Jose's welfare only as far as it extends in time and space within the limits of the crisis and may turn a blind eye to Jose's vices. But this does not preclude the possibility that the friendship will endure, since both Pedro and Jose come to care about each other *qua* persons within the context of the ineradicable particularity of their relationship. Myopia is not itself a good thing, but the friendship is. Pedro might not trust Jose in domains of life outside the context of their particular friendship, but *within* it, each may trust the other deeply *qua* friend. As we have told the story, Jose is neither at war with himself nor with Pedro *within* the ambit of their valuable friendship. Indeed within the particularity of the relationship, Jose has virtues that he directs at the flourishing of Pedro out of care for Pedro because he is Pedro. In this respect Jose is lovable, just as in the same respect, Pedro is lovable.

It might be thought that as we have told the story, Jose and Pedro are character friends, since the friendship persists because of Jose's virtues and despite his vices. This is true, but the fact remains that Aristotle and his followers think that the asymmetry in virtue and vice is just too great to count as a character friendship. A second reason why Jose and Pedro cannot enjoy a character friendship is that the range of their shared deliberations over common goals is very different for each. Jose remains a gangster with all the attendant vices, yet still is a *good* person *within* the context of his highly particularized relation with Pedro.[38] The Aristotelian *homonoia* essential to character friendship is limited on the part of the vicious – unlike Pedro.

[38] We know of little sustained discussion in the literature for our claim that vices and virtues may be limited to certain domains of life. O. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 271, and N. K. Badhwar, 'The Limited Unity of Virtue', *Noûs* **30** (1996), 306–329, reject the 'globality assumption' that if someone has a virtue, then she must have it in all domains of her life (Badhwar 1996, 308).

Nonetheless Badhwar thinks that virtue in one domain cannot coexist with vice in all or most domains because vice entails a fundamental ignorance of the good, and an individual who is virtuous in one domain of life cannot be fundamentally ignorant of the good in most other domains (1996, 320). Although we will not press this point, it seems to us that Jose may know what the good is in domains of his life that do not involve Pedro, yet still do bad.

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(ii) Friendship between the good and the bad may enable goods in a form of practical reasonableness particularly associated with the bad

The friendship between Jose and Pedro enables goods both for the community and for Pedro. This might be because Jose has practical reasonableness particularly associated with gangsters that Pedro doesn't have, for example an instinct for self-preservation, an astute sense of when to bully and when to cajole and an insight into how to exploit the corruption of government officials. Although Jose has vices such as greed and anger, he also has virtues that are of immediate practical importance for the good of Pedro, such as courage and loyalty. In this respect, Jose is not entirely bad. Nor are these virtues merely instrumental goods, because they are employed for the good of Pedro, *qua* friend.

It might be objected that the truth of the counterfactual claim, 'Had Jose not conceived affection for Pedro, then he would have done bad things to him' shows that Jose is not a friend.[39] But its alleged truth merely demonstrates the fragility of the friendship rather than its absence. Jose may be as the saying goes 'a good friend but a bad enemy'.

(iii) Certain goods of perceptiveness might be more readily available in a less than perfect world to someone who is less than perfect

Jose is less likely than Pedro to see the world through rose-tinted glasses. In a less than perfect world he is more likely to perceive duplicity, intrigue and malice, and so is better equipped to deal with them. On the other side of the coin Pedro, precisely because he is a virtuous agent both within the friendship and outside it, may be less able to perceive such qualities in others.

It might be objected that, on one plausible interpretation of Aristotle's view, it is impossible to have *phronesis* without virtue, so Jose has no practical reasonableness.[40] We see no reason to accept this claim. Why should we suppose that only the virtuous have *phronesis* or that being 'street smart' cannot count as having practical reasonableness? As reflected in the phenomenology of our everyday lives, we often talk of people who are 'wise in the ways of the

[39] Cf. T. Scanlon, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism' in A. Sen and B. Williams (eds), *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 103–128 and *What We Owe Each Other* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[40] We certainly cannot settle here the complex relations between virtue and *phronesis*. Our point, as the narrative makes clear, is that certain forms of practical reasonableness may be particularly available to the bad.

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world' and even when they are less than virtuous we will often seek their advice and help. It is precisely because Jose is a morally imperfect agent operating in a morally imperfect world that allows him to develop dispositions for dealing with other morally imperfect agents that Pedro might find difficult to develop, dispositions that are essential not only for well-being but also for mere survival. The employment of these dispositions, we suggest, constitutes a particular kind of practical reasonableness, and when it is directed at the good of Pedro *qua* friend, is an intrinsic good.

(iv) Forms of deception or self-deception may be crucial both to friendship and to psychological health

While this topic is peripheral to the key asymmetries we discuss, nonetheless it is instructive in understanding epistemological asymmetry. It is also important in critiquing the Aristotelian view that truthfulness is needed for valuable friendship.

Let us now revisit our story of Andrew and Brendan. Suppose that Andrew asks Brendan point-blank if he has the talent to ditch his job as an accountant and become a professional musician. Brendan knows that doing so would be disastrous for Andrew. Wishing to spare his feelings, he tells Andrew the lie that he has the talent but also tells him that the best way to pursue the change of profession is to do it in stages while holding on to his regular job. The lie protects Andrew's feelings and also the friendship while promoting Andrew's welfare or flourishing by allowing him to develop a more realistic view of it.[41] One friend but not the other may well be an expert in domains of life of crucial significance for the other. Moreover, human knowledge is inevitably limited in all sorts of important domains of life. Against this context of epistemic uncertainty, deceit may promote goods that are internal to friendship, because they are directed at promoting the friend's good.[42]

As we have seen, Aristotle and his followers are committed to the claim that falsity undermines friendship because it tells against one of the central benefits of friendship, namely self-knowledge. However, there may also be 'no-go' areas in friendship. It might be practically wise of Andrew to conceal his painful childhood from

[41] It might be objected that the lie is told to protect the friendship. This might be true, but it might be to protect the friend as well.

[42] We cannot hope to do justice here to the intricacies of the debate on the morality of deception. We are only committed to the claim that certain sorts of deception may promote goods internal to a relationship.

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Brendan because attempting to confront it himself would lead to his psychological disintegration. Or Brendan might know that for the sake of his psychological welfare, Andrew has deceived himself into thinking that his childhood was untroubled. Against Aristotle, Brendan might preserve the friendship by leaving Andrew's self-deception untouched, out of a care for Andrew that is sensitive to the particularity and vulnerability of his self, warts and all. Doing so protects him from harm and so promotes his flourishing.

(vi) Friendships may be morally inspirational - and so valuable - precisely because of their moral asymmetry

Suppose that Mother Teresa befriends a reprobate. The friendship affords her many opportunities to exercise virtue in practical action. The reprobate for his part has many opportunities to improve his character and goals through emulation and instruction. None of this rules out the possibility that Mother Teresa and the reprobate may come to care for each other intrinsically as friends. So friendships that are asymmetrical in virtue allow possibilities of moral regeneration. Since such possibilities are themselves goods, there are goods internal to friendship that the symmetrical view cannot explain. In fact the value of the friendship partly *accrues* from the moral asymmetry. Perhaps a rich actual case illustrating the capacity to have a morally (and spiritually) asymmetrical friendship is that of Christ and Mary Magdalene.[43] The special nature of their friendship is particularly celebrated in the Protestant traditions.[44] Moreover, while Christ is reported as usually employing the *agape* family of terms, he is also reported as specifically using the *philia* group in referring to Lazarus in John: 11, John in John: 20 and Peter in John: 21.

5. Conclusion

We have shown that Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian accounts of friendship have overlooked a fourth important category of friendship,

[43] Controversy exists over whether Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. We take no position on this, although the *New Testament* makes no such explicit claim. Here we are referring to the mediaeval depiction.

[44] See H. D. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1992), 407ff and C. Bourgeault, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2010), *passim*.

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one that is valuable - indeed morally valuable. Unlike character friendships, such valuable friendships do not require significant symmetries of separateness of self, extension of second self, virtue or significant epistemological symmetry. Of course this is not to say that friendships of pleasure or utility cannot also be asymmetrical in these ways. For example, someone who enjoys the company of a lively individual because he delights in her amusing wit may be shaped by her in his goals much more than *vice versa*.[45] While we have not discussed friendships of pleasure or utility in any depth, our account of the dynamic nature of asymmetrical friendships allows for the banal fact that these may evolve from less valuable friendships of pleasure or utility. This insight tracks phenomenological experience, since even the most exalted friendships often originate in pleasure or utility. Our cases of asymmetrical friendship also differ from Aristotle's friendships of pleasure, utility and character because these are categorized in terms of attraction to pleasure, utility or virtuous character as motivating grounds for the friendship. Our cases do not fit this categorization so neatly.

Our account of asymmetrical friendships thus provides an account of valuable friendships that is much less demanding than Aristotle's character friendships. One obvious criticism of our approach in this paper is to say that Aristotle and those influenced by him on friendship are specifically concerned with character friendship as an ideal. Thus the asymmetrical friendships we discuss may indeed be valuable but less than ideal. We do not challenge this view. However it is widely recognized that Aristotle situates his ethical thinking in the context of everyday life. This suggests that any account of ideal friendship must also be concerned with the sorts of valuable friendships that actually *do* occur in everyday life. Our account of valuable asymmetrical friendship as distinct from pleasure or utility friendship restores this everyday focus, one we suspect Aristotle might endorse. To conceive of valuable friendship as being entirely or even mostly located in the ideal spectrum is to place the bar too high.

We agree with Aristotle that no one would choose to not have a full character friendship, but since friendships of pleasure or utility are no substitute, it is a poignant reality of life that we must sometimes settle

[45] Aristotle comments that 'Friendships of utility are commonly found between opposites such as the pairing of rich and poor and ignorant and learned since each finds much in the other something that he needs'(*EN* 1159b12–24). L. S. Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40, points out that this would be better as '… such as the pairing of rich ignorant and poor learned since each finds much in the other something that he needs'.

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for valuable asymmetrical friendships rather than no valuable friendships at all. It may well be that in Aristotle's era it was easier for his peers to enjoy character friendships since they had the wealth and thus the time to pursue joint projects together over extended periods of time. The rise of technology such as the internet, the increasing affordability of air travel and the modern importance of the concept of privacy means that in today's world we often lead lives that are much more compartmentalized.[46]

A question remains. How closely do valuable asymmetrical friendships overlap with Aristotelian character friendship? One conjecture is that asymmetrical friendships lie on a continuum of value below character friendships, so that as the asymmetries are decreased, they approach character friendship. This coheres with the fact that the asymmetries themselves are defined in terms of conditions that admit of degrees. However, a careful answer to this question demands another paper.*

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