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Friendship and the Cultivation of Virtue

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FRIENDSHIP AND THE CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE

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Most theories about the cultivation of virtue fall under the general umbrella of the role model approach, according to which virtue is acquired by emulating role models, and where those role models are usually conceived of as superior in the relevant respect to the learners.¹ In this paper I will argue that, although we need role models to cultivate virtue, they are not sufficient. We also need good and close relationships with people who are not our superiors. This common overemphasis on role models is misguided and misleading, and a good antidote draws on character friendship as conceived by Aristotle. My primary concern is to show how much we stand to gain by including character friendship in our account of virtue cultivation.

1. Character friendship

Friendship is a relationship characterized by mutual affection, well-wishing, and by mutual acknowledgment of this well-wishing and affection (Aristotle, *NE* 1155b32–35). According to Aristotle, such a relationship can be based on virtue, pleasure, or utility, but only friendship based on virtue is complete (*NE*, Book VIII, Ch. 3).² It is clear

¹ See, for instance, D. Carr (1991), J. Annas (2011) and L. Zagzebski (forthcoming). I am thinking here about the models with whom the learner has a certain kind of personal exchange. Virtue theorists usually focus on the dyads children/parents, student/teacher, pupil/master... They also refer to historical or fictional models, but I think this also gives to the models a halo of superiority over the learner.

² This does not mean, however, that in complete friendship friends are not useful or pleasurable to each other, but rather that those are not the primary grounds of the relationship. In fact, pleasure or enjoyment of each other's

that the complete form of friendship implies mutual well-wishing and a disposition to act for the other's well-being for her own sake. Nevertheless, it is debated whether all types of friendship imply such requirement.³

Be that as it may, the thesis according to which friendship plays a fundamental role in the moral development of human beings, is both descriptive and prescriptive. The thesis is not about human life and friendship in general, but about *good* human lives and *good* friendships. Surely some relationships we are in the habit of calling "friendships" are morally corrupting. Because of that, I need to say a bit more about what a good friend is.

a. A good friend is a friend with good character

According to this approach, a good friend is one we love mainly because of her good character, her good (moral and intellectual) qualities. As Bukowski and Sippola (1996) put it: "...friendship is facilitated by a concern or appreciation for constructs concerned with goodness, such as generosity, honesty, kindness, loyalty, and authenticity. In other words, what matters is a concern for and an interest in goodness rather than perfection" (p. 242). This is what Cooper (1980) calls "character friendship" (instead of using the original Aristotelian expression "virtuous friendship") since he claims this friendship is possible between people who are not fully virtuous.

company is an important feature of complete friendship. For a good characterization of these three kinds of friendships, see J. Cooper (1980), M. Nussbaum (1986), and N. Badhwar (1993).

³ J. Cooper (1980) and M. Nussbaum (1986) claim all forms of friendship must include this, whereas T. Irwin (1999) says they do not.

Admittedly, his notion of the good friend works only if we conceive those good qualities as inseparable from the person and her history. As Badhwar (1987) suggests, "...an individual cannot be known or loved as an end if he is seen as a set of qualities divorced from their expression in his life" (p. 22). A friendship grounded in the good qualities of the friends is non-instrumental, only so long as those good properties are conceived as being part of what the persons are, their history, and the way those properties are expressed in the individuals in a unique fashion.

b. *A friend is a mirror, another self*

Aristotle writes, "Equality and similarity, and above all the similarity of those who are similar in being virtuous, is friendship" (*NE* 1159b3–5; see also 1156b7–22). He also frequently speaks of a friend as another self (*NE* 1161b28, 1166a30-33, 1166b1, 1169b5-7, 1170a2–4, b6–8, 1170b6f, 1171a20, and 1171b33). This second way of thinking about the good friend presupposes the previous definition of her as someone with good character. Since good friends base their relationship in the acknowledgment and appreciation of their good, if not-yet-perfect, characters, it is preceded by a certain similarity in character.

Despite this requisite similarity in character, it is important to keep in mind that for Aristotle, good or character friendship can occur between "unequal" people. Between a father and his son, a man and a woman⁴, "and of any sort of ruler toward the one he rules" (*NE* 1158b14-7). The required similarity in friendship is a similarity in what they

⁴ According to Aristotle, men and women are unequal. This is not my view.

value, in what they consider a good life, because that would put them together in the same path of desiring to cultivate their virtues.⁵

That we think of our friends as other selves seems psychologically plausible not only because we feel that they are an important part of what we are, but also because, as Sherman (1989) claims, “we experience a friend's happiness or sorrow as our own” (p. 136). We feel that in certain way our friend’s achievements and failures are ours, and we feel pride or sorrow in each case. This is a corollary of an extended conception of the self, in the sense that it includes others, and especially friends.

Nevertheless, we must be careful with this idea. Although true friendship could require us to think of our friends as other selves, it will also require us to have an accurate notion of separateness. Otherwise, the requirement of “wishing the friend’s good for his own sake” would not make any sense. If I am wishing my friend’s good but I think that my friend is the same as me, I may be wishing just my own good. In other words, the object of friendship’s love must be seen, at the same time, as independent from myself⁶.

2. What makes friendship special?

A. The desire or need of sharing. Friendship is a unique form of experience

One of the most salient features of friendship is that it is constitutive of human flourishing. Since human beings are social, they need others to live well, and this explains why families, communities, and *Poleis* (cities, states) are needed for human

⁵ This means that a learner and a role model might be friends, too. In such a case, the moral learner is learning from her role model, although not *via* role-modeling, but rather *via* the friendship.

⁶ See Sherman 1991, p.139.

well-being. But why is friendship also needed? According to Aristotle, a happy human life is one in which the human excellences or virtues are exercised. A happy life is a virtuous life. But unlike Plato, Aristotle recognizes that virtue by itself is not enough for leading a happy life (*NE* I.8). There are some external conditions needed too, such as health, money, good birth, power, and most of all, friends. He calls friends the ‘greatest’ and ‘most necessary’ of external goods (*NE* 1169b10, 1154a4), without which we would not choose to live ‘even if we had all other goods’ (1155a5–6, cf. 1169b16–17). Why? I think that in Aristotle’s theory character friendship plays a fundamental role in the development of the kind of theoretical and practical reason that make a flourishing life possible⁷, not only because in his account friends are required to exercise virtue, to do fine actions (1170a5-13), but also because according to him one of the most important things that character friends do is sharing activities, conversation, and thought (1170b5-15, 1171b30-1172a15): “For in the case of human beings what seems to count as living together is this sharing of conversation and thought, not sharing the same pasture, as in the case of grazing animals” (1170b12-14).

In this sense, Aristotle’s notion of the sharing that is fundamental to character friendship is closer to inhabiting a way of living, a way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and acting in the world, than the idea of inhabiting a space⁸. This is why Aristotle talks here of *homonoia*, usually translated as concord or consensus (1167a23). Such shared views have also as their corollary shared activities, which could include appropriate eating, talking, investment of money, free time, and so on. I think this is what Aristotle meant when he said that friends share “distress and enjoyment” (*NE* 1166a1-10).

⁷ For a similar view, see A. McIntyre (1999).

⁸ For more on this, see M. Nussbaum (1986: 358, 369).

Although this occasional sharing is needed as a pre-condition for character friendship, a sustained sense of sharing over time seems even more important. This sense is constructed through the history of the relationship. Such a sense of sharing involves more than just commonality; it implies mutual knowledge and a certain shaping of one friend to another. According to this interpretation, this sharing has both epistemic and creative functions because the knowledge and the love developed through it can actually create some new characteristics in the friend (Badhwar, 1993). This notion of shareability has also reformative force (Brewer, 2005) or, on some views, is influential enough to construct friends' selves (Millgram, 1987). One way to restate my thesis is that this form of sharing provided by character friendship is fundamental for character formation, because it constitutes a privileged source of a certain kind of motivation (via knowledge and emotions) necessary for the cultivation and exercise of virtue.

B. Friendship as a privileged source of knowledge necessary for cultivation of virtue: knowledge of a person

According to Aristotle, practical wisdom requires knowledge of particulars⁹ (1107a31-32, 1110b6-7, 1110b31-1111a2, 1111a22-24, 1141b15-24, and 1142a23). Practical wisdom or *phronesis*, understood as prudence or the knowledge of how to live well, is concerned with actions, and actions have to do with particulars. As a consequence practical wisdom requires knowledge of particulars, among which, I think, are individuals. My thesis is that *a special and unique kind of knowledge* of human

⁹ The term *particulars* in Aristotle is in opposition to the term *universals*, and seems to refer to specific and concrete instances knowable only by experience (*Met.* 981a12-24; *NE* 1112b34-1113a2).

beings is afforded by friendship due to the experience that its sharing provides. But what kind of knowledge is this?

First, friendship is a relationship that gives the parties knowledge of the particular persons they are.¹⁰ Friends are the people with whom we establish a closer relationship that allows us to know the other well. For example, we might think that being compassionate to someone whom we do not know well consists in some specific action, but being her friend would put us in a better position to judge what would count as being compassionate to her. This does not mean, however, that we need knowledge of everybody whom we feel compassion towards, but rather that having close relationships like friendship would make us more capable of imagining the different forms being compassionate could take. Moreover, friendship not only gives us the opportunity to know the other in a privileged way, but also the opportunity to know ourselves better (Cooper, 1980). Since our self is not always transparent to ourselves,¹¹ friends can show us that and help us see our-self better. Friends come to know us so well that sometimes they can see our real intentions or reasons better than we can.

As Badhwar (1993) claims "...friendship does seem to have features that make it a privileged source of self-knowledge and even, perhaps, necessary for *adequate* self-knowledge" (p. 8). She says this is due, in part, to friendship's differences from *agape* and parental love, both instances of unconditional love:

...neither in *agape* nor in parental love do we see ourselves mirrored in the other as the particular persons we are. Nor do these loves invite the intimate self-disclosure that

¹⁰ Although there are some objections to this idea, according to which friends are "flattering mirrors" who encourage self-deception, as well as the evasion of one's friends faults, I agree with N. K. Badhwar (1993, pp. 6-7) in that a friendship based in the evasion of the selves of the friends as they are, is deficient as friendship.

¹¹ For more on this, see J. W. Butler (2006), and M. W. Martin (1986).

enables friends to gain better insight into themselves. Moreover, their unconditionality ensures their constancy and thus deprives them of an important incentive that friendship contains for self-examination, an incentive that comes from the possibility of the demise of friendship (*ibid.*).

Second, friendship gives us knowledge of human experience, in much the same way as literature and movies do, from within a specific narrative and context different than our own. Knowing and understanding others consists, partly, in understanding the narratives within which they act. We come to understand and sometimes judge fictitious character's actions in a movie or a novel differently when we know the circumstances, reasons, and emotions that led them to act in a certain way.¹² Similarly, knowing my friend's story - or at least part of it - makes me aware of different and often valid ways of seeing things and acting, and different ways of living a good life.

Third, and maybe more importantly, this knowledge of human experience *touches us* in a distinctive way, since in friendship we establish a sort of dialogue that makes us grow. The knowledge about the person who is my friend, and the knowledge of her narrative (her story, or part of it) has a different status than our knowledge about others, such as family members or fictitious characters, and our knowledge of their narratives. We establish a special sort of dialogue with friends. It is a dialogue distinct from that with our family members mainly because it is freely established and cultivated, and it is different from the dialogue with fictitious characters mainly because friends confront us in a more vivid way. They are persons with real projects, values, and goals, with actual need of us, as are we by them.

¹² Concerning the value of literature and movies for moral understanding, see M. Nussbaum (1995).

C. Friendship as a privileged source of emotions necessary for virtue cultivation: love, admiration, shame, trust, and hope

1. Love or philia

Under the rubric *love* I am including also what others have called *care* (Noddings, 2003, 1994, 1992; and Smila, 2009) and *attachment* (Sherman 1991, 1982). It refers to the affective ties that bind the persons involved in the relationship of character friendship, and act as a motivational force for the virtue cultivation of the friends.

Interestingly, relatively few scholars (Sherman 1991, 1982; Nussbaum, 1986, 1980, 1979; Badhwar 1987, 1993; Smila, 2009) have emphasized the importance of attachment or love for the cultivation of virtue, and even fewer have focused on its importance for moral development in general (Blum, 1986; Murdoch, 1970). Love, nevertheless, seems to be an important element in the picture of character development. Character friendship, specifically, requires a form of love according to Aristotle: love of the other for the other's sake (1155b31-34).

I think Nancy Sherman (1982 and 1991) has formulated the most detailed neo-Aristotelian developmental account of virtue cultivation, and has best emphasized the role of affective attachment within it. In *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Education*, she claims Aristotle's theory is in the middle course between traditionalists and Socratics on the issue of moral education, "...preserving on the one hand the role of filial ties in the transmission of values, and on the other, the importance of practical reason in providing a critical assessment of attachments" (1982, p. iii). According to her, Aristotelian moral training is a "...training of 'right pleasures and pains', or attachments to certain ends and objects of value" (*ibid.*). This explains why such training starts within the family, since

affective attachment among parents and children makes it possible. During this period, she claims, respect and shame are the main motivational forces (*ibid.*, pp. 77-88).

Aristotle claims that after this period, *paideia*¹³ should be developed through music and tragedy as an element of extended moral training outside the family. This stage of *paideia* creates an attachment to the characters that music and tragedy express as one of the motivational forces for improvement (besides fear and pity, *ibid.*, p. iv).

Although Sherman acknowledges the broad meaning of the word *philia*¹⁴ for ancient Greeks, most of the time she uses it to refer to the family, more specifically the parents and the role they play as models for children's character development. In other places (1991, 1987) she talks of friendship as the perfect arena for cultivating virtue, but does so only in passing comments.¹⁵ Moreover, she refines her neo-Aristotelian developmental account of cultivation of virtue in which she claims that "Aristotle might accept something like this picture: there might be an early period in which affective capacities are cultivated, followed by the more active development of rational (and deliberative) capacities, and then eventually the emergence of full rationality" (1991, p. 158). I do not think this development implies the abandonment of the cultivation of affective capacities, and that is why friendship is as important as role models for virtue cultivation from late childhood to adulthood, even if rationality has fully emerged.

¹³ *Paideia* was the Greek term for children's formation, which included the transmission of both technical and moral knowledge.

¹⁴ *Philia* is usually translated as "brotherly love" or "friendship", but within the ancient Greek culture it would include both love for a family member and for a friend, and even for a romantic partner in the modern sense. For this reason, some translate it as love (see M. Nussbaum, 1986).

¹⁵ Although her (1987) is specifically about Aristotle's notion of character friendship, her concerns there are about how this notion is related to his account of happiness.

2. *Admiration*

Imitation, *mimesis*, seems to be connatural to human beings, and this may be why most theories in virtue cultivation claim role models are fundamental in the process of cultivation of virtue. According to Linda Zagzebski (forthcoming), this process is explained because we admire someone and that admiration moves us to want to emulate them. I agree with her basically in that admiration is *one* of the key motivations driving virtue cultivation, and it does so by helping us identify and emulate exemplars. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight that in her theory, as in Sherman's (1991, 1999), character friends help us cultivate virtue, but only insofar as friends are also taken to be models to emulate. My claim is that this process is more complex. Friendship is an experience that consists mainly in a form of sharing that allows a special sort of knowledge –the knowledge of a particular, a person- and harvests emotions of crucial importance for the cultivation of virtue. There is more to the process that makes character friendship valuable for virtue cultivation than the emotion of admiration.¹⁶

3. *Shame, trust, and hope, or the value of the friend's gaze*

The emotion of shame also seems to be natural for human beings. Although its manifestation and causes vary throughout our life and it is in many ways conditioned by our culture, we seem to have a natural predisposition to feel ashamed. Against the thesis according to which shame impedes our moral development and cultivation of virtue, following Kristian Kristjánsson (2014) I contend shame is an important emotion

¹⁶ Another interesting variation of this thesis is suggested by B. Polansky (2014) where he claims that admiration does not necessarily drive us to want to *be like* others, but to *be with* them. To admire admirable persons from a distance is a distant second-best. We want to be better because we want to deserve their friendship. I like this idea, among other reasons, because it shows that admiration not always conduces to emulation.

that could prompt moral learners, especially from early adolescence to adulthood. In particular, I contend that some of the shame our character friend makes us experience moves us toward our better selves.

For Aristotle shame is a positive emotion. Although emulation and shame – the two emotions he says are proper for young people - are ‘negative’ in that experiencing them is not pleasurable, he claims they have positive moral value in that they prompt cultivation of virtue. Aristotle defines shame as “...a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds, past, present, or future, which seem to tend to bring dishonor...” (1383b22-1-2). In this way it is a ‘negative’ emotion within a modern interpretation. Moreover, since he claims shame is not an emotion for the fully virtuous, because the virtuous would not have anything to be ashamed of (1128b21-32), one might be inclined to argue that Aristotle holds this interpretation and talks in favor of the avoidance of shame. Nevertheless, shame is for him a morally significant emotion that is structurally similar to virtue in its capacity to be felt for the right reasons, in the right way, at the right time, etc. (1115a14). Shame is not, as the modern interpretation holds, only a harmful emotion. Moreover, it is a valuable emotion appropriate for some people (1128b10-36, 1179b11), especially for youth (1128b17-21).

Aristotle’s position might appear puzzling – how can shame, a non-virtue not only lead to virtue, but disappear once virtue is achieved? In order to solve this puzzle, we need to recall that Aristotle distinguishes between true and conventional shame (1384b23-24), and he attributes a higher positive moral value to true shame. As M. K. Sokolon (2013) puts it, Aristotle:

... differentiates between the things for which we feel shame before friends as opposed to strangers [...] In front of intimates, we feel shame for things which seem shameful according to the truth (*aletheia*); in contrast, in front of strangers, we feel shame for

things considered disgraceful due to custom or law (*nomos*).” (p. 452). [...] before friends, brothers and intimates, we feel shame for actions considered truly shameful and are expected to be honest, candid or frank in our speech. (p. 553).

The true shame felt before our good friends is one that connects us with our self and helps us to examine it. This distinction between true and conventional shame has another important implication: it problematizes the distinction made on the modern interpretation according to which shame is primitive because it is heteronomous (is triggered by others) while guilt is civilized because it is autonomous (is triggered by oneself). It seems to be true that shame comes as a sort of anticipation of the possible look of another, regarding past, present, or future misdeeds. But the Aristotelian distinction shows us that there is a middle ground between the mutually exclusive possibilities of judging ourselves autonomously and judging ourselves heteronomously. We can judge ourselves by thinking from the perspective of our good friend. From Aristotle’s perspective, my good friend is certainly another, she is outside of me, but she is at the same time another self. Since she can see me from outside she could be sometimes a better judge of myself, and since she is another-self she also judges me, in a certain sense, from inside.

Moreover, it seems that true shame does not depend only on the fear of being discovered, or actually being seen, but rather on the imagination of the other. This is what Bernard Williams (1993) calls “the internalized other” (p. 84). According to him, because modern culture does not recognize the importance of the other’s gaze we easily make the mistake of thinking that the notion of shame is primitive whereas the notion of guilt is civilized. But he claims that “If guilt seems to many people morally self-sufficient, it is because they have a distinctive and false picture of the moral life,

according to which the truly moral self is characterless” (p. 94). On the contrary, that imagined gaze of the other helps us, in his words, “to rebuild the self” (p. 94). This is why shame still does the same work that it did for ancient Greeks, even if we do not recognize it: “By giving through the emotions a sense of who one is and of what one hopes to be, it mediates between act, character, and consequence, and also between ethical demands and the rest of life” (p. 102).

Finally, the other’s gaze which I claim to be central to the power of character friendship seems to trigger other emotions important for the cultivation of virtue, such as trust and hope. As Victoria McGeer (2008) puts it, people who trust and hope in us reflect back to us an idealized image of ourselves. We become better by the way they see us and treat us, we become our own exemplar in the eyes of our friends and loved ones, and that motivates our improvement. In this sense, she claims, trust imposes normative expectations on the trustee:

...it is an attitude we take towards the character of their agency—in part, I will argue, by taking the same attitude towards our own. That is to say, it is an attitude that both empowers us in our trust—making it possible for us to think and act in trustful ways—and empowers them through our trust, by stimulating their agential capacities to think and act in trust responsive ways. (p. 242).

Again, we see that the process of virtue cultivation could be triggered by admiration, but here admiration does not conduce to emulation. It does not lead the learner to want to be *like* the exemplar, but rather to actualize the possibility expressed by the normative expectations of trust and hope of a good friend. McGeer claims:

... we are sometimes encouraged to look outside ourselves for role models, finding in others’ thoughts and actions laudable patterns on which to fashion our own. And this may serve us pretty well. However, something similar can occur, often more effectively, through the dynamic of hopeful scaffolding. Here we look outside ourselves once again; but instead of looking for laudable patterns in others’ behavior, what we find instead are laudable patterns that others see—or prospectively see—in our own. We see ourselves

as we *might* be, and thereby become something like a role model for ourselves. The advantage in this is clear: Instead of thinking, 'I want to be like *her*,'—i.e., like someone else altogether—the galvanizing thought that drives us forward is seemingly more immediate and reachable: 'I want to be as she already sees *me* to be'. Hopeful scaffolding can therefore serve as a very powerful mechanism for self-regulation and development. (pp. 248-9).

I think shame, trust, and hope, emotions in which the other's gaze is central, function in a similar way. All of them are powerful mechanisms for self-regulation and development. The thought of the potential or real shame experienced by what a good friend would think and feel about possible misdeeds could keep the learner from acting in that manner. In the same way, the hope and trust of a good friend could redirect the learner's formation.

D. The praxis¹⁷ of character friendship: cooperative interactions and collaborative dialogues

Aristotle claims virtuous agents need friends to do fine actions (1170a5-13). A central element of my thesis is the idea that a collaborative relationship is a privileged arena for cultivation of virtue throughout life, but I contend that this collaborative or cooperative dimension of the relationship is expressed through actions and dialogues. First, it is expressed in actions mainly through mutual care and attentive responsiveness in the interactions. When doing a favor for each other for instance, good friends do it in a way that takes care of their real needs and reflects care. They do not do it just because it is their one kind action of the day, or because they feel obligated by their religion, or because it was an easy thing for them to do. This is important for the

¹⁷ Usually understood in ancient Greece as activity.

cultivation of virtue because, as we know, having the right motivations is fundamental to act virtuously. Acting out of knowledge and love for your good friend seems the right motivation.

This sort of cooperative interaction, which action in character friendship implies, provides the friends with a sort of practice that is fundamental for virtue. Although following Exemplarist Virtue Theory (Zagzebski, forthcoming) we could recognize the importance of the learner's emulation of the exemplar's emotions and beliefs, what children may have learned by emulating their exemplars needs to be constantly exercised. Friendship constitutes another important sort of "critical or intelligent habituation," (borrowing Annas' (2011) terms), since it provides friends the possibility to practice their virtues-in-formation.

The second way that the collaborative or cooperative dimension of friendship is expressed is through discussion. We have already mentioned that, according to Aristotle, one of the central elements that defines character friendship is their sharing in conversation and thought (1170b5-15, 1171b30-1172a15). With K. Kristjánsson (2015), I want to highlight here that, contrary to what some have thought (Sanders, 2012), discussion is an important element on the Aristotelian picture of character development. Aristotle refers to it several times (1157b10-14; 1170b11-14). And it seems clear that his "...description of *phronesis* entails its developmental dependence upon a period of radical intellectual reassessment of the traits of character (*hexeis*) that one has been sensitised to, and internalised previously, in a less intellectual fashion" (K. Kristjánsson, 2015: 122). Such intellectual reassessment is not just a matter of pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps, but rather requires critical engagements with others. Dialogue and

critical exchange with your character friend seems the perfect arena for this. As we have already seen, your special knowledge and love for your good friend, as well as hers for you, would greatly facilitate this re-examination.

Recall all that will facilitate such a dialogue. We have seen that while character friends need not be similar in many things, they need at least to be similar in that they both share some fundamental ways of seeing the world, some interests, and some goals. Maybe this similarity is what makes them equal in the relevant way, and makes them feel authorized or invited to intervene in the other's process of virtue cultivation. On the other hand, the fact that character friendships are chosen makes them contingent or accidental, which means we must put in effort and time to maintain them. Because character friends enjoy and appreciate each other and want to keep the relationship, they care about what they say or do to each other.

The fact that good friends are in a deep and close relationship characterized by mutual knowledge and appreciation makes them feel safe to say and do things they would not say or do to other people. Because they know each other well and love each other, they can say and do things to one another that can make them grow, and that nobody else could say or do¹⁸. Their mutual knowledge puts them in a sort of privileged position to harm or help one another, but their mutual love makes them use this power for the other's well-being, ultimately for the other's flourishing.

¹⁸ This seems to be an accepted view in psychology. See, for instance, J. Piaget (1950): "...the individual, left to himself, remains egocentric...the relations of constraint and unilateral respect which are spontaneously established between child and adult contribute to the formation of a first type of logical and moral control...There is progress here, no doubt, since such a transference accustoms the mind to look for a common truth, but this progress is big with danger if the supreme authority be not in its turn criticized in the name of reason. Now, criticism is born of discussion, and discussion is only possible among equals: cooperation alone will therefore accomplish what intellectual constraint failed to bring about" (409). See also J. Dunn (2004).

3. Why the role model account is incomplete

Although in the role model approach friendship is mentioned, theorists usually claim we learn virtue from our friend *qua* role model, i.e. by emulating her. My thesis is that it is not just from the friend that we learn virtue, but from the relationship itself. I have been arguing that character friendship is an experience which provides necessary elements for human cultivation of virtue that the experience of having a role model cannot give us. The special form of sharing in which character friendship consists facilitates self-knowledge and the knowledge of the good friend (knowledge of particulars), and triggers other emotions important for the process of virtue cultivation besides admiration, such as love, shame, trust, and hope. Finally, I have argued that character friendship is a *praxis* in which the mutual collaboration through actions and dialogue cultivates the friend's virtues.

I have mentioned that, within the Aristotelian view, practical wisdom requires knowledge of particulars. I take it that with the notion of *particulars* Aristotle is referring, among other things, to individuals. According to him, practical wisdom is a sort of master virtue, the virtue that regulates the exercise of all the virtues as a whole. As a result, it seems that from the Aristotelian point of view it is not possible to be virtuous without knowledge of particulars. My suggestion is that we cannot get such a knowledge just from a role model, and that is why we need character friendship.

Take the case of a lucky moral learner who is in a character friendship with her role model. The role model account of virtue cultivation is committed implicitly to the view that that moral learner will not learn anything relevant to the cultivation of virtue from her

role model as a friend; and further that she will not be cultivating virtue in her participation in the *praxis* of the character friendship, but only in her practice of emulating her role model outside the bounds of the friendship. But that is a highly implausible view. I have shown how much a moral learner might derive from her character friend and from a character friendship in her cultivation of virtue, regardless of whether or not she is in a character friendship with a role model, a virtue-superior.

The overemphasis on emulation in the role model approach (focused primarily on the training of the emotions) overlooks the importance of this training through the experience and *praxis* of character friendship, as well as the importance of reciprocity. The collaborative or cooperative dimension of character friendship, facilitated by certain equality of power between friends, is something that a role model cannot provide¹⁹. This dimension constitutes the perfect arena for the training of the reason through discussion, and functions as a bridge between the habituation for virtue at home and the public life that implies an important cognitive step further in virtue development.

The way we conceive and value friendship has important consequences for how we foster moral development in general, and cultivation of virtue in particular. Since a virtue is a disposition to act well, motivated by the right reasons and emotions, its cultivation requires the development of those reasons and emotions. Such cultivation starts in early childhood with the help of parents, teachers, and tutors, and in this stage admiration and emulation are fundamental. But from late childhood to adolescence and further, the cultivation of the type of motivation needed to act virtuously is mostly driven by character friendship.

¹⁹ To see some empirical evidence that seems to support this thesis, see J. Dunn (2004) especially p. 38 and 61; and Walker et al. (2015), especially p.p. 13-14.

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