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### Friendship and Partiality: Toward a Theory of Virtue

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# FRIENDSHIP AND PARTIALITY: TOWARD A THEORY OF VIRTUE

HENRY CURCIO

ABSTRACT. We take our friends to be different from others. Unlike the people we pass while walking or acquaintances we have from our work, our friends carry a special sort of value to us. That is to say, we are partial to our friends. This much is seen regularly – maybe when we help our friend who is struggling with work as opposed to any other co-worker. But, what sort of theory supports this claim to partiality? In this paper I will outline a number of accounts, all of which attempt to explain our partiality. I will argue that each of these accounts is lacking and then give my own account of partiality. A distinctly virtue ethical theory of partiality will prove to be best so far as it positively maps onto our intuitions of friendship (especially as a moral phenomenon).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Trust, mutual reciprocity, well-wishing, and shared history are features of friendship few would question.<sup>1</sup> Partiality, the special preference we give our friend, is similarly accepted but also generates specific ethical problems that these other features do not.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, (P) we should show partial concern for our friends. But, we should also show impartial concern, or respect, for the dignity of all people. Let's call this principle of impartial concern or respect (I). When (P) and (I) come into direct conflict, what should we do? Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett (2000) advance the position that we should opt for (P) if (P) and (I) come into conflict and I agree with them.<sup>3</sup> But this also generates its own problem. If we opt for (P) we might act in a strictly immoral way on behalf of our friends. Because of this, C&K show that friendship can lead us to moral danger. They conclude that friendship is independent of moral values and even immoral friendships remain valuable. I will show that the account of partiality they argue for is suboptimal. Then, I will argue against other recent accounts of partiality. Finally, I will advance my own position, a distinctly virtue ethical account of partiality and friendship. Against C&K, this account will show that friendship is inextricably connected to moral values (especially our moral education) and that a strictly immoral friendship is in fact no friendship at all.

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<sup>1</sup> Features of reciprocity and well-wishing have been included since Aristotle's account of friendship. See his *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), (1155b34) and (1156b9-10). Interestingly, trust appears only in the periphery on his account. For more on trust, see Mark Alfano, "Friendship and the Structure of Trust," in *From Personality to Virtue: Essays on the Philosophy of Character*, ed. Alberto Masala and Jonathan Webber, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 186-206. On the topic of shared history, see Thomas Hurka, "The Goods of Friendship," in *Thinking About Friendship: Historical and Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Damian Caluori, (New York: Palegrave Macmillan, 2013), 201-217. Especially, see Amelie O. Rorty, "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love Is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds," in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 73-88.

<sup>2</sup> For a clear argument that friendship in particular is partial, see Troy Jollimore, "Friendship Without Partiality?" *Ratio* 13, (2000), pp. 69-82.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, "Friendship and Moral Danger," *The Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2000), pp. 278-296. Hereafter C&K.

2. PARTIALITY AND THE *Project View*

C&K argue two varieties of theses in their article. First, the traditional, largely Aristotelian, conception of friendship is far too moralized. Second, the partial nature of friendship can lead us morally astray. So, friendship is frequently not grounded in morals and, on their account, likely independent of moral values. Despite this, C&K still regard friendship, even immoral ones, as a good.

So far as I am concerned, I agree that some accounts of friendship are far too moralized. One such example that they point to is Nancy Sherman (1993) who states that “each [friend] is inspired to develop himself more completely as he sees admirable qualities... manifest in another whom he esteems.”<sup>4</sup> One need not search far to find friendships that don’t quite fit this model – imagine a group of amiable drinking buddies. Are they trying to develop moral virtues in themselves and one another? Likely, no. In agreement, Alexander Nehamas (2016) remarks that sometimes it is the smaller things we appreciate about our friends. And sometimes it is the less than perfectly moral qualities in our friends that we appreciate most.<sup>5</sup> So, it is fair to say that this account of friendship is over moralized. But what can be said about the related thesis that the value of friendship is independent of moral value? Consider an example C&K pose when they acerbically joke, “a friend will help you move a house, a good friend will help you move a body.”<sup>6</sup>

You’ve been sitting at home and enjoying your last few hours of the weekend before you head to bed – all the while attempting to forget about the upcoming work week. Your close friend, Denise, sends you a text message... “I’ve gotten myself into a little bit of trouble and am gonna need some help. Are you around?” Concerned for her well-being, you respond with a quick “yes” and she tells you

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Sherman, “Aristotle on the Shared Life,” in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 105. For a perspective on the moral nature of friendship in relation to justice, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), sections 70–74. For a view on the moral nature of friendship and its relation to feminism, see Marilyn Friedman, “Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community,” in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 285–302. And, for an influential account of friendship as a moral phenomenon, see Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality*, (New York: Routledge, 1980), 67–83.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Of Friendship*, (New York: Basic, 2016), 27–28. In the words of Susan Wolf (1982): “I don’t know if there are any moral saints. But if there are, I am glad that neither I nor those about whom I care most are among them.” Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982), pp 419.

<sup>6</sup> Cocking and Kennett, 278.

that she will be at your house in a few minutes. She knocks. Upon opening the door, you find Denise standing there with an oversized black trash bag containing a dead body that she hopes to get rid of with you. So, should you remain partial to your friend and help her? I am inclined to say no due to the immoral nature of the act. But, given the fact that you *truly* value this friendship, C&K seem to think you should help your friend. This conclusion is far too hasty and is the result of an objectionable account of partiality. In this section, I will argue against their account of partiality.

Hesitant to accept C&K's conclusion, one might wonder, is a relationship that leads us morally astray truly a friendship at all? C&K would say yes.<sup>7</sup> They address this objection in two directions. First, it is clear that friendship requires trust: without loss of generality, if one is a notorious liar it's hard to trust that they may not lie to their friend, and if one is not trusted you can hardly call them a close friend. Against this, C&K explain that we frequently act partially to our friends. One might lie to others, but, when restricted to the confines of friendship, are entirely trustworthy. Second, a concern of exploitation is raised: a real friend would rarely purposefully involve you in a problem of theirs that could lead to you getting into trouble (that is cover for them, lie for them, etc.) because then they would be exploiting you and no good friend would exploit their friend. Against this, C&K note that when we are between a rock and a hard place it is usually our friends that we turn to. And, it is not against friendship to help a friend (even if it calls for moral wrongdoing).<sup>8</sup>

Both defences hinge on the ways we might expect friends to be partial to one another. In the first, we find C&K explaining away a problem of trust using partiality toward friends. Because we are partial to our friends, we would never lie to them – a point that seems true and relatively uncontroversial. In the second, C&K implicitly acknowledge that asking for help from a friend presupposes a partial relationship; one in which we will act upon the behalf of our friends' immediate concerns. While it is true that helping a friend is not against friendship, their following point that

<sup>7</sup> For a similar analysis, see Nehamas, 59-63 and 187-200.

<sup>8</sup> Much of this is a narrower reformulation of Susan Wolf's (1982) argument that 'moral saints' are unsuitable as human ideals. C&K show us with similar force that our standard, moralized, philosophical interpretations of friends appear inadequate, see Wolf (1982), pp. 419-424.

acting partially for our friend is fine even if it leads to moral wrongdoing rests on an objectionable account of partiality.

It seems as though C&K conceive of partiality in friendship as a combination of “mutual affection, the disposition to promote the other’s serious interest and well-being, and the desire for shared experience.” They add that, “friends are characteristically receptive to being directed and interpreted and so in these ways drawn by each other. As a close friend of another, I shall be especially disposed to be directed by her in our shared activities.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, by being friends with someone, their serious interests and well-being direct my preferential attitude toward them.

This account of partiality is not uncommon and is sometimes referred to as the *project view*.<sup>10</sup> Bernard Williams (1981) makes note of “ground projects” that constitute the identity of an agent and their sense of meaning in life.<sup>11</sup> On his account, these ground projects constitute such a large sense of identity and meaning that one ought to act partially toward them, and, although Williams makes no direct comment on friends, it seems fair to say that he would conceive of a friend as someone who acts partially for your ground project when needed. Susan Wolf (1992) supports another version wherein we express our individuality through our ties, especially to others. These ties constitute a certain kind of project that directs us to reasons for partiality.<sup>12</sup>

At first glance, this view seems plausible. There certainly exist such things as ground projects that help constitute our identity. And, because we cannot imagine living without them, they may certainly generate reasons for partial behavior on their behalf. But, on further inspection, the project view is lacking in some regards. This much can be observed in friendship so far as on the project view, friendship is supported by a shared ground project and partiality. But we can conceive of cases where there is a friendship with partiality but no ground project and cases where there is a friendship with a ground project but no partiality.

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<sup>9</sup> Cocking and Kennett, 284.

<sup>10</sup> The terminology of ‘project view’ and ‘relationship view’ referenced are drawn from Troy Jollimore’s article, “Impartiality”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality,” in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Wolf, “Morality and Partiality,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992), 252.

We can start with an example of a friendship where there is partiality but no ground project. Consider the friendship I share with the staff of my local pizza restaurant.<sup>13</sup> They are kind to me and have been serving food to me for over a decade. I speak with them regularly and we mutually update each other on our lives. I can confidently say that we share a particular kind of friendship, and further I admit that I would do many things for these people because I feel partial to them. But, I wouldn't go so far as to say that they constitute any sort of ground project for me the same way my significant other does. So, some partial relationships are not ground projects.

What's more, we can imagine a friendship that shares a ground project, but is not partial. For example, a ground project of mine is my obsession with the band Steely Dan. Indeed, I have a number of people who I consider friends that I discuss Steely Dan with because we share these ground projects. But, simply because we all love Steely Dan does not lead us to any sort of partiality to one another. Moreover, our love of Steely Dan simply does not give any good reasons to be partial – certainly not in the same way I am partial to my significant other.

Harry Frankfurt (2004) aids the project view by outlining what he calls *reasons of love*.<sup>14</sup> What is most interesting about his account is the addition of the biological/psychological notion of higher order volition. That is, second order desires; desires about desires, or to desire to change what one is desiring. He argues that these higher order volitions constitute a clearer picture of what *really* matters to us.

This much seems promising. Once scrutinized, my friendships united by Steely Dan seem to be lacking. They are something my first order desires affirm because of the shared ground project, but my second order desires may not because of the lack of any kind of partiality. Similarly, my friendship with the staff of my local pizza restaurant may be affirmed by my first order desires so far as I am partial to them. But, a ground project is lacking so my second order desires may not affirm this as a friendship that *really* matters.

Although even with this, a concern of transparency may be leveled against Frankfurt. That is, “we tend to be rather poorly informed of our own attitudes and

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<sup>13</sup> For more, see Pizza Pete's located on 86th and Columbus Avenue in New York City.

<sup>14</sup> Harry Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

desires” to such a degree that they might not be the best indicator for decision making.<sup>15</sup> One such example might be that of a drug addict. While in a moment of withdrawal both their first and second order desires agree with using more. But, as we all know, in the long run that is likely not the best decision in terms of their well-being. Would being partial to your friend who is a drug addict in withdrawal look like acting upon their second order desires if those desired constituted giving them more of what was causing this pain? I’d hope not.

Let’s return to where we left off with Denise. Indeed, you might find yourself in a scenario where your friend asks you to help them move a dead body. While acting partially might look like helping Denise move the body, it is not always. Another way you may be partial to her in this scenario is by refusing help and telling her to phone the police (barring a criminal-justice system that will not lead to the rehabilitation of your friend). That is, keeping a careful eye on her long-term well-being, even if she’s lost sight of it.<sup>16</sup>

To be clear, this opens my position to a rather strong objection of elitism so far as my comment might be taken as condescending. If I object to Denise moving the body and refuse to help her because it is not constitutive of her well-being or in her best interest, she might scoff at me all while thinking, ‘what does this guy know about *my* interests and *my* well-being?’ This concern is real and I hope to return to it later.

We have now spent time considering the project view, what I take C&K’s position of partiality to be. Considering the multiple objections leveled, it seems reasonable to say that the project view may not be the best formulation of what partiality looks like, especially in friendship. For that reason, it seems that we ought to leave the project view and consider another option.

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<sup>15</sup> Frankfurt, p. 21 n. 6.

<sup>16</sup> What if Denise is strictly speaking innocent, and, as I mentioned, there exists a criminal-justice system in place that will only serve to punish her unjustly. This scenario will certainly put you in a bind. But, if Denise is truly innocent, you still might refuse to help move the body. Instead, you might help in another way – for example, getting a good lawyer for her, defending her with a testimony in court, or paying for her legal fees.

3. THE *Relationship View* AND MORE

The *relationship view* is another live theory of partiality considered by many philosophers. It contends that partiality is found in the ethical significance of our special relationships and that this ethical significance directs us to reasons of partiality. The relationship view is far broader than the project view so far as it encompasses a number of distinct but similar theories. For example, Joseph Raz (1989) explains that friendship is intrinsically valuable because the relationship directs us to particular *duties* of friendship.<sup>17</sup> Niko Kolondy (2003) makes a similar, but not equivalent, claim by arguing that our friendships have “final value” and these final values direct us to special reasons of partiality in our relationships.<sup>18</sup> And, Samuel Scheffler (2004) offers a stance that describes non-instrumental relationships as directing us to duties of friendship.<sup>19</sup> These are only three of many examples, but I take Raz’s view to be the most general example of the relationship view.

The key idea to the relationship view is that we should not value our relationships for their instrumental value, but instead for the non-instrumental value or for their own sake. An example might be that of a parent and a child. A child certainly has little to no instrumental value for a parent.<sup>20</sup> The child is unable to provide for themselves and gives little to the parent besides lack of sleep. But, the parent still loves their child nonetheless. That is, the parent loves their child non-instrumentally. And, their bond is a special one so far as it does not need to rely on instrumental value. This is not to say that special relationships cannot also hold instrumental value. But, it does make the claim that special relationships ought to be rooted in concern for the other in and of themselves. Raz continues by explaining that if you have a relationship as intrinsically valuable or rooted in non-instrumental concern, then this relationship provides special reasons for partiality.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Raz, “Liberating Duties,” *Law and Philosophy* 8 (1989), pp. 3-21.

<sup>18</sup> Niko Kolondy, “Love as Valuing a Relationship,” *The Philosophical Review* 112 (2003), pp. 135-189.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Scheffler, “Projects, Relationships, and Reasons” in *Reasons and Values: Themes From the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*; ed. R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith; (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 247-269.

<sup>20</sup> For a similar argument, see Plato, *Lysis*, translated by David Bolotin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 207d5-210d8.

<sup>21</sup> Raz, 18-19.

This view, like the project view, seems promising. But, I will argue two reasons to be sceptical of it. First, it attempts to remove a relationship from its context in a way that is only troublesome. For example, on the relationship view a parent-child relationship would be considered intrinsically valuable. Yet, it is very possible that the parent is abusive. So, it seems to me as though the child should feel little reason to be directed to particular duties toward that parent. In the case of friendship we run into similar problems. When two people deem themselves friends yet their friendship is demonstrably toxic or exploitative for both parties (for whatever reason), it seems reasonable to say that these friends should not be directed toward particular duties for one another simply because the relation of friendship is valuable in and of itself. This is all to say that the context of a relationship matters. And, the relationship view attempts to remove the context of a relationship in such a way that hurts the view.

The second objection follows the first and is a particular reformulation of ethical self-effacement that is undesirable.<sup>22</sup> Self-effacement occurs when a theory tells us that we should not be motivated by the considerations that justify our actions under that theory. In essence, it outlines a schism between motives and reasons.

Consider an example where we act partially for our friend. Maybe they are about to die while bungee jumping and you are able to save them. On the relationship view, your motive for saving your friend would be because we have a duty to our friendship. This much seems strange because one would assume your motive is simply that their *life* was in jeopardy and you could not imagine a life without them. This shows another way in which the relationship view removes the context of a relationship. Of course the relationship would be in jeopardy in a scenario like this, but what *really* should be motivating you is not the relationship, nor the duty to maintain it, but your friends well-being.<sup>23</sup> While this objection may not

<sup>22</sup> For a thorough account of self-effacement, see the classic article by Michael Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976), pp. 453-466. Stocker also maintains some interesting positions on friendship. For his work on friendship, see his "Values and Purposes: The Limits of Teleology and the Ends of Friendship," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), pp. 747-765 and "Friendship and Duty: Some Difficult Relations," in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amelie Rorty, (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 1990), pp. 338-374.

<sup>23</sup> I believe a similar objection can be made against the project view. For example, if you were to save our friend in a bungee jumping accident, you would be forced to tell them that they constitute a ground project of yours. Certainly a regard for your friend seems missing in this response. As such, your motives and actions appear separate from one another in such a way that

seem significant, a theory that is self-effacing will only serve to confuse an agent so far as their practical reasoning becomes divided. That is, their actions, found in saving their friend, and their motives, located in duties toward friendship, seem to be divided or misaligned. As such, there will be a deficiency in action guidance and the theory will not be able to properly explain the motives that are situationally salient in a given scenario.

So, what is especially unsatisfactory about the project view and the relationship view is the way they direct our attention. The relationship view directs the agent's attention away from the friend in favor of the friendship. 'I am partial to you because friendship tells me to do so.' The problem with both of these is that they direct the attention from what really matters – your friend.

Peter Railton (1984) argues an influential account of partiality for the consequentialist.<sup>24</sup> Like Mill, he claims that a consequentialist agent need not actually change much of their daily preferential decision making.<sup>25</sup> Instead, he proposes that a sophisticated consequentialist will develop a kind of disposition toward impartial consequentialist aims and goals that emerge when called upon in very specific scenarios. That is, the behavior of this sophisticated consequentialist will be similar to that of a non-consequentialist (largely speaking partial and for the sake of their friend) with a qualification that they will occasionally be drawn to impartial concerns.<sup>26</sup>

Railton maintains that a sophisticated consequentialist can intentionally act partially in a way that brings about less than maximally ideal consequences. Against this, when a sophisticated consequentialist acts partially in a way that brings about

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is not necessarily self-effacing, but certainly self-centered. That is, the project view directs the agent's attention to something self-centered so far as an agent's response must be something along the lines of, 'I am partial to you because you are an important part of *my* project' or 'I am partial to you because you are *my* project.'

<sup>24</sup> Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13 (1984), pp. 134-171.

<sup>25</sup> Mill's move is argued as such: "They say [that utilitarian standards] require that people shall always act from the inducement of promoting the general interests of society. But this is to mistake the very meaning of a standard of morals, and to confound the rule of action with the motive of it... The great majority of good actions are intended, not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals, of which the good of the world is made up; and the thoughts of the most virtuous man need not on these occasions travel beyond the particular persons concerned, except so far as is necessary to assure himself that in benefiting them he is not violating the rights – that is, the legitimate and authorized expectations – of any one else." For more, see John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001 [1861]), 18-20.

<sup>26</sup> Railton, 148-156.

less than maximally ideal consequences, they must still hold that acting in this way is morally wrong. This is certainly counter to common sense morality.<sup>27</sup> If the agent knows that acting partially in some instance is morally wrong, why not be motivated by the impartial concerns of morality? So, this account still leaves much to be desired so far as the looming knowledge of morality may serve to confuse the agent.<sup>28</sup>

Although, something important does emerge from this account. Specifically, Railton's focus on *dispositions* is of interest. It seems reasonable to think of our partiality as some sort of disposition. I cannot help but be partially to my friend (or so the story goes). And, as neuroscientists John Cacioppo and William Patrick (2008) claim, there is something biological that drives us to partial behavior.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Frankfurt claims that there is some "volitional configuration [that] shapes the disposition and conduct" of the friend.<sup>30</sup> So, it seems reasonable to consider my partiality as something dispositional. When saving my friend from a bungee jumping accident, the content of my thoughts are not 'I ought to help my friend because of my relationships with them' or 'I ought to help my friend because they are a ground project of mine.' We simply act out of disposition in that moment because we are drawn to help our friend in need.<sup>31</sup>

An influential Kantian account of partiality is given by David Velleman (1999). Velleman explains our partial behavior as resulting from the limitations of human emotion. He claims that loving someone exhausts our emotional attention. So, by loving someone, we no longer have enough emotional attention to give to others. In doing this, Velleman keeps the spirit of impartiality alive. The corollary to his

<sup>27</sup> This point is also made by Troy Jollimore in *Friendship and Agent-Relative Morality*, (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Much literature has been published in response to Railton's indirect consequentialism and the theory still fosters debate. For a classic response to Railton, see Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley's "Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation," *Ethics*, 106 (1995), pp. 86-111. For more recent debate against and for indirect consequentialism, see Robert Card, "Consequentialism, Teleology, and the New Friendship Critique," *Pacific Philosophy Quarterly* 85 (2004), pp. 149-172 and Matthew Tedesco, "Indirect Consequentialism, Suboptimality, and Friendship," *Pacific Philosophy Quarterly* 87 (2006), pp. 567-577 respectively.

<sup>29</sup> John Cacioppo and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 205.

<sup>30</sup> Frankfurt, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Williams (1981) also makes this point cf. 18. And, Frankfurt follows a very similar thought cf. 35-37.

argument would be: if we had greater emotional attention or were not so limited as humans, we would be able to remain impartial.<sup>32</sup>

While Velleman's account makes room for partiality in the Kantian framework, it sadly provides little with respect to action guidance. That is, he makes little attempt to explain how exactly we ought to be partial to our loved one or friends. Still, I find this account particularly convincing for a number of reasons. It makes ample room for the distinctly emotive qualities of friendship. Explicitly, Velleman describes the love for our friends as "an arresting awareness" of our friends' value that specifically arrests "our tendencies toward emotional self-protection from" them.<sup>33</sup> This much strikes me as reflecting the dispoitional nature of friendship already touched on above. And especially, it describes our partiality as a particular kind of *skill*. Implicitly, Velleman makes the claim that we ought to be careful in regard to those we are partial to. With only a finite amount of attention, it is important that we learn to focus our partiality to relationships we see as worthwhile and full of trust – especially considering that these deep connections arrest our tendencies of emotional self-protection and make us deeply vulnerable.<sup>34</sup>

More recently, Daniel Koltonski (2016) has also constructed a Kantian account of partiality with respect to friendship that clears up the concerns of action guidance mentioned in Velleman's account.<sup>35</sup> He follows a very direct link to the Kantian tradition so far as it renews one of Kant's own claims. Specifically, that we ought to show respect to the "expression... of a rational being" and that autonomy is "the ground of the dignity of a human and of every rational nature."<sup>36</sup> Framed by the context of moral disagreement, Koltonski argues that we ought to be partial to our friends when they provide good reasons. So, the position makes the claim that we ought to be partial to our friends if they provide reasons to be partial that have properly engaged with moral deliberation. Koltonski takes this to be the case even

<sup>32</sup> David Velleman, "Love as Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999), pp. 362-373.

<sup>33</sup> Velleman, 361-362.

<sup>34</sup> This concern of vulnerability is also raised directly by Kant when he warns against letting our friends *too* close to us. See his *Lectures on Ethics*, translated by Peter Heath, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 118.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Koltonski, "A Good Friend Will Help You Move a Body: Friendship and the Problem of Moral Disagreement," *The Philosophical Review* 125 (2016), pp. 473–507. Much of his account is grounded in Kyla Ebels-Duggan's Kantian account of love "Against Benefice: A Normative Account of Love," *Ethics* 119 (2008), pp. 142-170.

<sup>36</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1785]), 4:436.

if you believe to have better reasons – such deference is to respect the autonomy and rationality of your friend. Extending Velleman’s account, Koltonski makes the claim that our love and partiality for our friends arrests “our tendencies toward what might be called practical or deliberative self-protection.”<sup>37</sup>

Against this, and parallel to our objection to Railton’s account, Koltonski allows for an agent to make a subpar rational decision while knowing a better option. And, this much seems to fly in the face of Kantian thought. Even if Denise offers you good reasons that have properly engaged with moral thought to move this body with her, it would still seem puzzling to do so if you too have other good reasons that allow the immoral action to not happen. Like Railton’s, this account still leaves much to be desired so far as it may confuse the agent.

So, it seems as though both the consequentialist and Kantian formulations of partiality are lacking because both seem to be liable to confuse the agent. Although the dispositional nature of partiality and the fact that we might conceive of partiality as a particular kind of skill jumps out as important. This is certainly true for a virtue ethical account of partiality. Both disposition (*hexis*) and skill (*techné*) will be fundamental aspects of a virtue ethical account of partiality (or so I will argue). In the next section I will motivate this point and flesh out the virtue ethical position of partiality in friendship.

#### 4. A VIRTUE ETHICAL APPROACH TO PARTIALITY AND FRIENDSHIP

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato has Socrates ask Theaetetus whether we ought to have concern for “the most distant proverbial Mysians.”<sup>38</sup> Discussion of partiality, it seems, are not absent from the ancient philosophers who prioritized virtue. But, there is no clear agreement among the virtue theories. So, to sort this out we will need to employ a degree of creativity in constructing a pastiche of the ancient theories. I will discuss the virtue systems of Mencius, Aristotle, and the Stoics to describe what components of them remain viable considering the objections leveled above. The goal will be to synthesize this into a coherent theory of partiality. The

<sup>37</sup> Koltonski, p. 487 n. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, translated by Christopher Rowe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), (209b7-8).

result will reinforce recent modern attempts at describing our partiality; specifically that of Iris Murdoch (1970) and Lawrence Blum (1980).<sup>39</sup>

To begin, we should outline the positions of Murdoch and Blum in order to set our sights on what exactly is relevant when drawing on the ancient theories. Against the positions argued above, Murdoch and Blum both take our partiality as something that cannot be reduced down to “an explicit set of arguments and positions.” Blum points out that there are “certain concerns, general orientations of thought, intellectual tendencies, metaphors, and the like which do not necessarily congeal into definite views or positions” in our partial decision making.<sup>40</sup> And further that emotions, especially altruistic ones, “cannot be regarded as natural processes external to our moral agency.”<sup>41</sup> Their goal in making these claims is to focus the attention of partial decision making back onto the individual. That is, the individual as a whole as represented outside of their rationality.

To do this, Murdoch proposes a method of “really *looking*” where we place “a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality.”<sup>42</sup> That is, we must pay acute attention to the individual and observe, as Blum puts it, “the weal and woe” of those close to us.<sup>43</sup> This much strikes me as uncontroversial and almost as commonsense when being partial to another person. It is a matter of disposition for us to observe “the weal and woe” of our friends so we know how to be partial to them – for example, to comfort one’s friend. This shifts the partial gaze away from the self (as found in the project view) and away from the relationship (as found in the relationship view) and back onto the individual in and of themselves. That is, it removes the cognitive step of observing that a person is a ground project, or holds a specific relationship to the agent, and tells the agent to simply observe what factors of the situation are salient for partial action toward their friend.

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<sup>39</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, (New York: Routledge, 1970) and Lawrence A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality*, (New York: Routledge, 1980).

<sup>40</sup> Blum, 10. Murdoch makes a similar point about metaphor in moral reasoning when she says that “the development of consciousness in human beings is inseparably connected with the use of metaphor” (pp. 75).

<sup>41</sup> Blum, 83.

<sup>42</sup> Murdoch, 89 and 33. This much Murdoch borrows from fellow Platonist Simone Weil. For more information on Simone Weil and her idea of attention as a philosophical concept, see A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Benjamin P. Davis’ article, “Simone Weil,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta.

<sup>43</sup> Blum, 76.

What's more, the attention we place on others, which we take as a disposition, develops into particular skills. As Murdoch puts it, "we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and *grow by looking*."<sup>44</sup> That is, the attention we place on others is a certain kind of moral perception that forces us to ask how we can be moral to our loved ones in a given scenario. And, answering this question with "clear vision" results in moral insights and specific moral skills to be perfected.<sup>45</sup> Murdoch makes this point clear to us when she further explains that

"at the level of serious common sense and of an ordinary non-philosophical reflection about the nature of morals it is perfectly obvious that goodness is connected with knowledge: not with impersonal quasi-scientific knowledge of the ordinary world, whatever that may be, but with a refined and honest perception of what is really the case."<sup>46</sup>

This entails what was already stated above – that "really *looking*" forces us to use a set of moral skills. But also, this entails that our partial moral gaze aids in our moral education. Without loss of generality, our friendships give us an environment to really *look* at what set of moral skills are salient given a scenario and then can be applied to the agents' relationships at large.

So, this view is particularly appealing for a number of reasons. First, it argues that our partiality is a kind of disposition. Specifically, that we often naturally find ourselves attuned to the "the weal and woe" of those close to us. And second, that this much is not a deficiency in our moral reasoning but in fact a skill to be developed that helps in our moral education. Third, and finally, this view will not serve to confuse the agent so far as where their attention should be placed in partial decision making. This much is true because the account tells the agent to place all their moral attention on the object of concern, the other person they are being partial to. Now, let us observe how these themes appear in the virtue theories.

Aristotle's theory of friendship, developed in part by the puzzles of friendship leveled by Plato in the *Lysis*, is strictly speaking partial.<sup>47</sup> In fact, he explicitly

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<sup>44</sup> Murdoch, 30. This is also echoed by Blum pp. 67-70.

<sup>45</sup> Murdoch, 36. The point of education is also made by Blum pp. 74-75.

<sup>46</sup> Murdoch, 37.

<sup>47</sup> For more on the relationship between Aristotle's theory of friendship and the *Lysis*, see Julia Annas, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism," *Mind* 86 (1977), pp. 532-554; Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20-36; and Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, *Plato's Lysis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 312-322.

states that “it is finer to benefit friends than to benefit strangers.”<sup>48</sup> Two recent commentators have argued for competing views of partiality with respect to Aristotle. Specifically, Jennifer Whiting (1991) has argued that Aristotle’s formulation of our partiality is “largely a function of historical and psychological accident.”<sup>49</sup> Against this, Diane Jeske (1997) has argued that this view is far too impersonal.<sup>50</sup> I agree with Jeske on this point. But Jeske then goes on to argue for a formulation of the relationship view. Specifically, she claims that friendships, although this applies to relationships on the whole, “generate further moral reasons.”<sup>51</sup> I disagree with this point, considering the critiques of the relationship view made above.

Running parallel to this, Mencius’ account of partiality is a formulation of the relationship view. This is most apparent in his description of filial relationships. Specifically, he claims that “the most authentic expression of humaneness is serving one’s parents” and “the most authentic expression of rightness is following one’s older brother.”<sup>52</sup> These ought not be taken strictly at face value as much of Mencius’ writing is described in metaphor. But, it is clear that Mencius takes specific relationships to direct us to *li* – often translated as ritual, propriety, or *proper conduct* as found in duties toward others. This much also seems to be the case for friends on Mencius’ account.<sup>53</sup> But, like before, the relationship view is undesirable for a number of reasons.

The Stoics take great care to construct a strictly impartial philosophy.<sup>54</sup> This much seems to spell danger for us. With no agreement between these thinkers, how are we to construct a coherent theory of partiality from them? Fortunately, this concern does not actually impede on the project’s outcome. The readings of Aristotle’s theory may be correct. And indeed, the positions of Mencius and the Stoics are clear from the outset. But, the goal is not to argue on behalf of any

<sup>48</sup> *NE*, (1169b10).

<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Whiting’s “Impersonal Friends,” *The Monist* 74 (1991), pp. 23.

<sup>50</sup> Diane Jeske, “Friendship, Virtue, and Impartiality,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997), pp. 51-72. David Brink also levels similar criticism in his “Eudaimonism, Love and Friendship, and Political Community,” *Social Philosophy Policy* 16 (1999), 252–289.

<sup>51</sup> Jeske, 69.

<sup>52</sup> Mencius, *Mencius*, translated by Irene Bloom, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), [4A27].

<sup>53</sup> Mencius, [5B3].

<sup>54</sup> The feature of impartiality is made clear by Epictetus in his *Discourses*, translated by Robin Hard, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.22. Julia Annas gives a great overview of the Stoic conception of impartiality especially as it relates to friendship in *The Morality of Happiness*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 262-276.

one of these theories specifically. Instead, it is to create a uniquely virtue ethical position of partiality with respect to friendship.

John Cottingham (1996) offers us the best solution for uniting the virtue theories more generally. He argues that partiality is implicitly baked into the virtues. And, although Cottingham only argues this for Aristotle's virtue theory, this argument is attractive for its ability to be easily generalized to any other virtue theory. For example, a virtue like courage is partial so far as it "enhances the personal prestige of the holder, and by its value within the interconnected networks of honor and mutual respect which bind the citizens of a community." Similarly, a virtue like temperance is partial so far as it is directed toward those intemperate physiological desires we biologically inherit.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, at no point is his argument predicated on a position exclusive to Aristotle. So, it can be applied to the virtue theories at large.

The virtues are taken as dispositions thought to be crafted into skills in every virtue theory. Aristotle explains this using the notion of habituation. He claims that it is necessary to "acquire one sort of habit or another" toward the virtues and that these "actions should accord with the correct reason."<sup>56</sup> These habits are consciously attuned responses to particular situations.<sup>57</sup> The Stoics follow Aristotle in this regard and agree that the virtues are a "craft."<sup>58</sup> And, Mencius frequently employs the multiple meanings of *li* to refer to the ritualistic or habitual nature of *li* and the practice of the virtues.

So, the virtues are argued to be dispositions that can be crafted into skills. How exactly do we hone these skills aside from habituation? Each theory responds in a different, although congruent way. Aristotle makes the case for the application of a kind of evaluative intelligence which he labels as *phronesis*. Mencius argues for a kind of sustained attention that involves the mental habit of self-examination (*shu*) and the goal oriented activity of steering activities toward positive outcomes.

<sup>55</sup> John Cottingham, "Partiality and the Virtues," in *How Should One Live?* ed. Roger Crisp, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 59-60. See Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage*, (Albany, SUNY Press, 1990) for a comparative reading of courage in Confucian and Western thought.

<sup>56</sup> *NE*, (1103b24) and (1103b33).

<sup>57</sup> Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>58</sup> See Cicero, *On Ends*, translated by H. Rackham, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 3.24 and A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 61G.

This is referred to as *si*.<sup>59</sup> And, the Stoics argue in favor of a kind of situational awareness that allows the agent to develop a concern for others. This is referred to as *oikeiosis*.

To be clear, each of these are their own distinct definition behind them. But, they are united so far as each is a particular kind of moral attunement. We can quickly describe this by extending the metaphor of sight given to us by Murdoch. *Phronesis* is a kind of moral perception that allows us to see what is most important in a situation. This sight has a particular focus on how conducive certain actions are conducive to a good and happy life. *Si* is a kind of moral attention that involves seeing contradictions in one's motivations and realigning those motivations to conform to virtuous action. And *oikeiosis* is a kind of moral expansion that involves seeing how other people are a part of my own concern – how I should see them as belonging to me somehow and how I should treat them.<sup>60</sup> But more generally, *phronesis*, *si*, and *oikeiosis* are particular dispositions that attune us to virtuous decision making. These moral attunements are not rule based and they do not have a blueprint for instruction. They are attunements that command our attention and force us to observe a situation in order to make judgments from the factors of that situation in and of itself. In agreement, Williams (1995) observes for *phronesis* that these moral attunements make us alive to and guide us to a “repertoire of considerations that operate for or against courses of action.”<sup>61</sup>

I take these moral attunements to identify the same thing both Murdoch and Blum identify when they speak of “really *looking*” and paying acute attention to the “weal and woe” of those around you. That is, a specific observational disposition we have toward our surroundings, especially those we love. And, a disposition that can be cultivated into a skill. Moreover, similar to Murdoch and Blum, these attunements are partial. That is, if we are to take the virtues to be partial, as

<sup>59</sup> Mencius makes this clear at [1A7]. Confucius also argues this at selected points in his *Analects*, translated by Annping Chin, (New York: Penguin, 2014); 4:15, 12:1, and 15:24.

<sup>60</sup> To be clear, *oikeiosis* is distinct from *phronesis* and *si* so far as it is not described by the Stoics as an intellectual trait. Instead, it is a quite tangible activity of virtuous expansion. The distinctions between intellectual traits like *phronesis* or *si* and *oikeiosis* are important, but a detailed discussion of this is outside the scope of this paper. Briefly, the Stoic intent is to expand our field of concern to eventually everything. So, their theory, as already noted, is impartial. But in this paper we employ a reduced form of *oikeiosis* to simply note the idea of extending one's concern to others in a limited sense.

<sup>61</sup> Bernard Williams, “Acting as the Virtuous Person Acts,” in *Aristotle and Moral Realism*, ed. Robert Heinaman, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 18.

Cottingham argues, we must also take these moral attunements to be partial as they are not only attunements to the world around you, but the virtues as well.

What results is not dissimilar from Velleman’s notion of loved ones arresting our emotions. Indeed, these moral attunements arrest our moral attention toward others, especially friends because they are frequently a part of our moral considerations, specifically their well-being. What is found in the cognitive space of the agent will not be thoughts of the relationship, duty, or virtue. Instead, these moral attunements arrest our attention such that the cognitive space of the agent will be directed exclusively toward the other – that is their loved one, ie. friend. And, the agent will not be worried with regard to virtue because it is a skill that has been habitually practiced. Almost like a moral confidence, the agent acts with ease and without extraneous thoughts.

The point of moral education follows naturally from this. Indeed, these moral attunements are connected to our moral education, especially with our friends. Julia Annas (2011) remarks that the virtues are learned in “embedded contexts” such as “family, school, church, employment, siblings, friends,” etc.<sup>62</sup> The notion of embedded contexts in relation to virtue theories is crucial to our understanding of friendship. This much is the case because all three virtue theories take friendship to be a fundamental training ground for developing the virtues. Aristotle claims that friends allow us to be “more capable of understanding and acting” in accordance with the virtues and that friendships are advantageous for this reason. He also adds that friends display our own deficiencies and help us when our own efforts are not enough.<sup>63</sup> These, along with a litany of other examples, show us that Aristotle thinks of friendship as a training ground for the virtues.<sup>64</sup>

The importance of embedded contexts are not lost on the Stoics. In the best source we have on friendship in Stoic thought, Seneca’s *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, we find the friends Seneca and Lucilius in the process of moral education.<sup>65</sup> So, as A.A. Long (2013) observed, the entire work can “be read as a literary instance of Stoic

<sup>62</sup> Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 21.

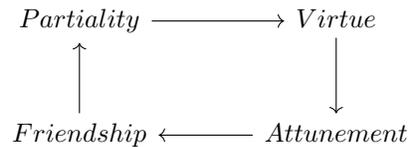
<sup>63</sup> *NE*; (1155a15-16), (1156b14-15), (1169b6-7), and (1172a13-15).

<sup>64</sup> For more remarks related to this, see *NE*; (1159b7-8), (1166a8-9), (1168a35-36), (1169a19-29), (1170a12), and (1171a30-34).

<sup>65</sup> For a specific discussion of friendship as it relates to the Stoics, see Seneca, *Epistles*, translated by Richard M. Gummere, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917); 6, 9, 35, 52, 63.

friendship in action.”<sup>66</sup> And, Mencius similarly notes the importance of embedded contexts in our moral education. For Mencius, this is frequently the family, but mentions of friends also occur.<sup>67</sup>

So, superordinate to virtue, moral attunement, and partiality is a cycle of moral education brought about by our friends and relationships at large. We can visualise it in the commutative diagram below.



We find that our partiality influences virtue so far as the virtues are partial. Virtue influences our moral attunement so far as our moral attunement is based in the habitual practice of the virtues. Moral attunement influences friendship so far as our friends arrest out our moral attention toward them. And, friendship influences our partiality so far as we are partial to our friends. Finally, the cycle continues, with each rotation giving us renewed opportunity to practice in our moral education.

To review, we take the virtue theories as partial because the virtues themselves are partial. For example, generosity is not directed to the world at large, but to a specific person or group of persons. What’s more, in utilizing the virtues each virtue theory offers a distinct, but similar, moral attunement that aids in moral perception and commands our attention to *see* what is truly important or salient in a situation. A person who has practiced the virtues will feel a certain ease in their practice of moral attunement. That is, it will feel like a disposition. Like a master craftsman, who is able to notice the details of a specific grain pattern on a piece of wood or observe a knot and how to utilize it to their advantage, the person who has practiced the virtues will have a kind of dispositional moral attunement when interacting with people or the world at large.

<sup>66</sup> A.A. Long, “Friendship and Friends in the Stoic Theory of the Good Life” in *Thinking About Friendship: Historical and Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Damian Caluori, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 229.

<sup>67</sup> See Mencius; [4A6], [6A8], and [7B31]. For related points made by Confucius, see his *Analects*; 1:7, 5:26, 8:2, 12:23, 12:24, 13:28. This point is also argued by Shannon Vallor with relation to Confucian thought in her *Technology and the Virtues*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 50.

What this offers us is an account of partiality that avoids thoughts about the self (found in the project view), one's relationship or duty (found in the relationship view), and even the virtues. It allows for the individual to focus all their attention onto the subject of concern, for example their friend and the friend's well-being. This much is true because friends arrest our moral attention so as they are a part of our moral considerations. Further, this account offers us a clear understanding of how this process is developed and taught. That is, through habituation and practice, we are able to develop ourselves into a positive moral direction. And, our friends offer us this training ground as the relationship offers both a training partner and a space that is comfortable so far as you trust your friend. The partial relationship serves as an arena for moral education for both parties in which both can practice the virtues and hone their moral attunement.

Each one of these advantages appear in Murdoch and Blum's formulation, although the ancient theories aid in fleshing out these ideas. For these reasons, the virtue theory of partiality is advantageous when observed in comparison to others already argued against. That being said, there are objections which ought to be responded to. The next section will field these objections. It will be clear that these concerns can be reasonably defended against.

## 5. OBJECTIONS

It has already been hinted that this formulation of partiality and friendship is subject to criticism. The two objections I would like to field in this section involve the critique of over moralizing friendship raised by C&K and the concern of elitism raised earlier in this paper. We will first respond to the former, finding ourselves only more susceptible to the later. But, both objections will be thoroughly explained away upon further inspection.

Over moralizing friendship is certainly something we should be careful about – recall the amiable drinking buddies. And, as C&K demonstrate, this much is especially the case for the generally Aristotelian construction of friendship. So, the first objection might be leveled as such: by utilizing a largely Aristotelian platform in constructing this account of partiality in friendship, we have over moralized the phenomenon of friendship.

Against this, the case I have made for partiality in friendship as a moral phenomenon is more than reasonable and although it is moralized, it is hardly *over* moralized. This is especially true when we observe the fact that friendship is a fundamental training ground for practicing day-to-day morality as the virtue theories notice. One cannot simply read Kant or Aristotle and fully intuit what morality entails. Being moral is an inextricably social activity. One must be able to have an environment where they are able to practice these skills. And, one does not need to read Kant or Aristotle to be moral precisely because these moral lessons are taught and practiced through our friendships (and relationships at large).

A parent watching their child in a playground can surely recall many occasions where their child has wronged a friend (maybe Isabel took Jeffrey's Tonka truck). The expectation is that Jeffrey's negative emotion elicits an empathetic identification with Jeffrey in Isabel: 'I would feel the same pain Jeffrey does if he took my Hess truck,' she thinks while returning the toy (maybe with a little parental guidance).<sup>68</sup> Through this, Isabel has learned a new moral lesson – do not steal, especially from friends. And, next time she sees Jeffrey, she will have an opportunity to practice this. If she fails, it is safe to say that Jeffrey might not think of her as a friend anymore. What's more, Jeffrey might also learn a valuable moral lesson in forgiveness.

What we learn from this is that friendship is able to reinforce our practical understanding of moral activities characteristic in a good and happy life. That is, friendship helps us develop our character in a better direction – especially with regard to relationships, skills, and evaluative intelligence as found in the section above. Convincingly, the state of scientific research has shown evidence that this is the case. Cacioppo and Patrick argue that the fundamentally social nature of humans manifests itself both psychologically and physiologically in our frequently moral/altruistic behavior.<sup>69</sup>

With all of this, it is hard to imagine a friendship that is completely independent of moral values. Whether or not it is on the playground or in the office, our

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<sup>68</sup> This is commonly referred to as the 'empathy-altruism hypothesis' and is among the most common views in the psychological literature of moral development. For more, see Daniel Baston, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer*, (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991) and Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> Cacioppo and Patrick, 113-197.

friendships are where we are most likely to learn and develop in our moral education. So, I take it that my account of partiality in friendship is not over moralized.

But, now we run into the problem of elitism. Let's up the ante from the Isabel Jeffery example and return to the example of Denise asking us to move a dead body with her. Last we left, we objected to this telling Denise that moving the body is not constitutive of her well-being or in her best interest. Reasonably enough, she scoffed all while thinking, 'what does this guy know about *my* interests and *my* well-being?' Denise's critique, telling us to get off our high horse, is reasonable enough.

That being said, I take this critique of elitism to be directed primarily at the language of how to address the situation with Denise. We critique our friends' decision making frequently and without conflict. We also often give our friends advice on life and what decisions to make in order to live a good and happy life similarly without conflict. Of course if we tell Denise, quite robotically, that moving the body is not constitutive of her well-being she will take it as a kind of affront to her rationality. But, as friends, we can find better ways to subtly give this information to Denise.

Recall that we take partiality in friendship to be a particular skill in seeing the relevant features of a situation. Similar to how a master craftsman is able to discern facts from the grain of wood they are working with, or how to manipulate a particular knot into an advantage of their project, the skilled friend "has learned from years of experience how to discern distinctions of worth that those without his skill cannot see."<sup>70</sup> That is to say, a skilled friend who is well attuned to the characteristics and temperaments of their friend will not only know *what* to tell their friend in a situation like this, but also *how* to tell their friend with compassion, love, and style. Maybe Denise is in need of an indirect explanation of why this is not in her best interests. Possibly Denise is of an analytic disposition and we need to employ a rigorous argument to explain why this is not in her best interest. Regardless, the skilled friend will be able to know what to say and how to say it in order to be partial to Denise's best interests and well-being.

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<sup>70</sup> Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 208.

Still, it is hardly the case that any of us are perfectly skilled friends entirely attuned to every moment of a situation. We will fail. And it can be reasonably said that we fail frequently in our friendships. This much is especially true when assessing what are in the best interests of others well-being. But, we ought to take these failures as the craftsman would and learn from our mistakes. This much is reinforced by the fact that we take friendship to be inextricable from our moral education. Accordingly, these failures are instances and opportunities for perfecting our craft of being partial to our friends. As one punk band puts it, these experiences allow us to “feel the pain of self-improvement.”<sup>71</sup> All we can truly hope for is that we are not encountered with a situation quite as extreme as Denise’s.

So, is moving the body with Denise still an option? Simply said, yes. Given the correct circumstances, the well attuned friend may deem it reasonable that being partial to Denise implies moving the body with her. That being said, it would likely require extreme circumstances for that to be in the best interests of Denise. Still, this does not further imply that friendship is not a moral phenomenon as C&K have argued. It is quite the opposite so far as the attuned friend has weighed the moral considerations of the given scenario and deemed it morally permissible to help Denise.

## 6. CONCLUSION

I have emphasized the notion of a situational moral attunement to be crafted like a skill in order to be partial to our friends. Further, I have explained that being partial to our friends is inextricably tied to our moral education and positively benefits the crafting of this situational attunement. In doing this, I have given a reasonable alternative to the project view, the relationship view, Consequentialist formulations of partiality, and Kantian formulations of partiality. Further, it has shown that C&K are wrong to think that friendship is not a moral phenomenon. Indeed, friendship has proved to be not only a prudential good, but also a moral good. To conclude, I’d like to emphasise this last point. It is hard to disagree that friends are a prudential good in one’s life. That is, friends constitute one of the many pleasurable goods of a life well lived. And, in their landmark article, *Very Happy People*, psychologists Ed Diener and Martin Seligman (2002) showed

<sup>71</sup> AJJ, “Skate Park,” on *Knife Man*, (Monte Sereno: Asian Man Records, 2014).

convincing evidence that friends are necessary for a good and happy life so far as that life is pleasurable.<sup>72</sup> Since then, numerous psychological articles have echoed this.<sup>73</sup> But, because of the limitations of psychological research, none have been able to speak toward the value of friendship in a morally good life. I hope that it is now clear that friendship is also valuable in a moral life well worth lived.

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<sup>72</sup> Ed Diener and Martin Seligman, "Very Happy People," *Psychological Science* 13 (2002), pp. 81-84.

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