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FRIENDSHIP AND THE CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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*To Rosa Matilde, my grandma; Cecilia, my mom; Carolina, my sister,
and Camila, my daughter, whose love and way of being present give
me the strength to cross lands; whose words give me light to clear my
thoughts.*

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Abstract

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 some relevant respect to the learners. I will argue here 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. I draw special attention to the notion of character friendship as conceived by Aristotle, as an antidote for the common misleading overemphasis on role models. My primary goal is to show how much we stand to gain by including character friendship in our account of virtue cultivation.

Friendship is a close relationship characterized by mutual appreciation, well-wishing, and mutual acknowledgment of such appreciation and well-wishing. Character friendship is a friendship grounded in the mutual appreciation of the friends' good characters, and a basic agreement and concern for the good. I hope to show here that such a relationship (a) constitutes a unique form of experience in which we share or inhabit a substantial way of seeing with a close other; (b) facilitates a unique form of knowledge, the knowledge of a

particular person (my-self and the other's self); (c) develops other emotions important for the cultivation of virtue besides admiration, such as love, shame, trust, and hope; and (d) is a praxis in which cooperative interactions and discussions function as a bridge between habituation of virtue at home and public life. Character friendship is an experience which provides necessary elements for human cultivation of virtue that the sole experience of having a role model does not.

There is empirical evidence that seems to give at least some indirect support to my thesis. According to developmental and social psychology, friendship in general is fundamental for human (moral and cognitive) development from a very early age. There are also good reasons to think adolescents know what a good friend is, an exhibit aspiration to be good friends and engage in what we call character friendships. As a consequence of this, I argue greater emphasis should be placed on the role of friendship within educational contexts. We, as adults, should acknowledge, care, and facilitate children's and adolescent's friendships within schools and homes, and implement some practical strategies to help them foster character friendships.

Introduction

Virtues are to human beings what singing is to birds and what building hives is to worker bees. They are grounded in our human nature and their exercise is part and parcel of what it is to live a good human life. A bird that cannot sing or a worker bee that cannot build hives would have difficult times living with others, leading a good life as a bird and as a bee. Without virtues human beings would not flourish.

Yet, unlike the singing of the birds or the building of bee hives, human virtues do not come naturally to us. Like our language or our capability to sing or dance, virtues need to be cultivated. They are rooted in our nature, but they need time, effort, and the help of others to develop.

This subject caught the attention of people from ancient cultures within both the Eastern and the Western world, and then it lost its centrality (at least, in large parts of the Western world) for some time until the twentieth century, when it regained its former appeal. Despite its origins in antiquity, nevertheless, the nature of virtue, the extent to which it is rooted in human nature, and how deep its connection to human flourishing is, is still a matter of debate. The issue of how virtue should be cultivated is central to this debate.

Notwithstanding this, however, there seems to be high degree of agreement among virtue theorists about some points regarding virtue cultivation. First, to my knowledge there is general agreement that virtue cultivation is a matter of habituation. How such habituation is conceived and what specifically should be habituated in order to become virtuous is, again, a matter of contention. But the general idea that virtue requires habituation might be the most generally accepted claim across various virtue theories. Second, the process of virtue cultivation is conceived as something that must start as early in life as possible, and because of that parents, teachers, and tutors are who lead and direct it. They are – or should be - like role models who exemplify virtue for the learners and who, eventually, help them understand what it is to be virtuous. Fictitious characters, rock stars, actresses, and professional athletes could also function as models of virtue. The process, it is said, is mainly motivated by admiration and emulation, and could last our whole life.

I want to challenge part of this second idea. In this work, I argue that most theories about the cultivation of virtue claim virtue is acquired by emulating role models, where those role models are usually conceived of as superior in some relevant respects to the learners. This common overemphasis on role models is misguided and misleading, and a good antidote draws on the Aristotelian notion of character

friendship. My primary aim is to show how much we could gain by including character friendship centrally in our account of virtue cultivation.

In chapter I, I start by examining some definitions of virtue. Following Aristotle (fundamentally his *Nicomachean Ethics*), virtues are defined as human excellences, character traits or dispositions to have the appropriate motives that lead their possessor to act in the appropriate way. The exercise of virtues is a constitutive part of human flourishing. The second section of this chapter considers the discussion about the two kinds of virtues: moral and intellectual, and evaluates whether there are good reasons to maintain such a distinction. I argue intellectual and moral virtues are only superficially different, because to a certain point their particular ends are different; but they are interdependent because those ends are, after all, components of the human good. The third section is about some answers to the question whether virtue can be taught. I start with the answers of Plato/Socrates and Aristotle, and then I move to some contemporary answers. I consider the view of Julia Annas (2011), according to which learning virtue is like learning some practical skills such as playing violin. It is a matter of intelligent habituation. Then I consider Rosalind Hursthouse's (2001) idea that the cultivation of virtue consists mainly and firstly on the education of our emotions, which is then followed by the education

of the reasons. Finally, I examine Linda Zagzebski's exemplarist virtue theory (2010, 2013, and 2017), where she argues that the process of virtue cultivation is motivated by the emotion of admiration, which conduces to emulation. This chapter concludes with the suggestion that maybe something important to the whole picture of virtue cultivation is missing: what we learn when engaged in close relationships with non-superiors, like in the special case of friendship.

In order to see why friendship is important for virtue cultivation, chapter II starts with some considerations about the nature of friendship. Friendship is a close relationship characterized by mutual appreciation, well-wishing, and mutual acknowledgment of such appreciation and well-wishing. Some of the main features of friendship are examined here, like its being constitutive of human well-being, its instrumental and its intrinsic value, as well as its being necessary for a happy self-sufficient life within an Aristotelian perspective. I claim this derives from Aristotle's conception of the self as social. The second section of this chapter specifies what good or character friendships are. Good friends appreciate each other's good characters, and see each other as a mirror, as another self. This means this relationship is based on a certain similarity between the friends, a similarity in the sort of things they enjoy and value in life. Character friends share time together but, most of all, they share projects, goals, conversation and thought.

Despite some acknowledgment within traditional moral theory of the importance of friendship for human flourishing, the issue of the justification for the love we feel toward our friends raises, unfortunately, almost a general suspicion. The third section of this chapter examines two of the main reasons for such a suspicion: i) the idea that our love for our friends comes from self-love and, because of that, is egoistic; ii) even if friendship is not ultimately egoistic, it is difficult to justify love for a particular person within an impartialist framework. Analyzing Aristotle's distinction between proper and improper self-love, we see that the love for a character friend does not spring from self-love but rather for the good character embodied in the friend. On the other hand, following Laurence Blum (1980), I argue that the second reason for the suspicion about the moral status of friendship is based on a shortsighted view of what a comprehensive moral theory should encompass. Properly understood, partial concerns must be seen as justified as impartial concerns. The second chapter concludes claiming genuine (partial) concern for our loved ones is as moral as the (impartial) concern for all humanity.

Chapter III explains in more detail why character friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation. I argue it is a special kind of experience and source of certain knowledge, emotions, and praxis necessary for the cultivation of virtues. The chapter starts with some

caveats and then section two explores what makes character friendship special. I argue character friendship (a) constitutes a unique form of experience in which we share or inhabit a substantial way of seeing with a close other; (b) facilitates a unique form of knowledge, the knowledge of a particular person (my-self and the other's self); (c) develops other emotions important for the cultivation of virtue besides admiration, such as love, shame, trust, and hope; and (d) is a praxis in which cooperative interactions and discussions function as a bridge between habituation of virtue at home and the public life. Character friendship is an experience which provides necessary elements for human cultivation of virtue that the sole experience of having a role model does not. I conclude the chapter with a brief reflection of why I think the role model account is incomplete.

In chapter IV I start by introducing some empirical results from developmental and social psychology that seem to support my thesis that character friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation, specially from adolescence onward. Extrapolating some empirical results from Judy Dunn (2004) and Walker et al. (2016) about children's friendships, I contend that contrary to major extent views within the tradition assert, adolescents can engage in character friendships. Based on this, in the second part of the chapter I derive some practical implications of my thesis, specially for parents and teachers. After giving some good

reasons to think we, as adults, should do something to help children and adolescents to engage and maintain character friendships, I consider some strategies that we could implement both at homes and in schools. As a starting point, I say we could acknowledge, care, and facilitate character friendships among children and adolescents. Then following Nel Noddings (2008), I recognize the value of modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation, as she understands these notions. I also follow Noddings (1994) in considering ordinary conversations, as well as what she calls interpersonal reasoning (1991), as highly valuable for moral education. In the third part of this chapter I briefly explore if some practical applications of the thesis are available.

The V and last chapter is a brief reflection on what I found and some indications for further developments.

Chapter I. On the cultivation of virtue

“Socrates' mistake, Aristotle himself says, is that 'he used to inquire what virtue is, but not how and from what sources it arises' (EE 1216b10–11; 1216b19–22).” Sherman, 1991: 157

1. Virtue

A virtue is a character trait or disposition to have the appropriate motives that leads its possessor to act in the appropriate way. Virtues are human excellences and their exercise is a constitutive part of human well-being.

As Aristotle puts it in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE), there are life situations that almost every human being faces and there is a spectrum of possible responses to those situations that usually goes from excess to defect. The appropriate response, which is usually in the middle of that spectrum, would be the virtuous response. Those situations are spheres, and so he claims there is a sphere of life where we have to deal with fear, for which the virtue would be courage (1115a61117b21), and a sphere in life in which we deal with pleasures (mainly bodily), for which the virtue is temperance (1117b23-1119b21). There are spheres in life in which we deal with external

goods such as money and honor, and there are the virtues of generosity and magnificence in the prior (1119b23-1123a34), and magnanimity and proper pride in the latter (1123a35-1125b26). In the sphere of anger the virtue is mildness (1125b27-1126b11), in the sphere of truth-telling, truthfulness (1127a14-1127b35), in amusements, wit (1128a1-1128b9), and in the sphere of meeting people in daily life is the virtue of friendliness (1126b12-1127a13)¹.

In order to better understand Aristotle's view of what a virtue is, let's see in more detail how he talks about one of his paradigmatic virtues, courage. Regarding the sphere in which we have to deal with fear, he claims courage is a mean between feelings of fear and confidence, but not about everything: only about what there are good reasons to think are worthy matters. He says:

... Whoever stands firm against the right things and fears the right things, for the right end, in the right way, at the right time, and is correspondingly confident, is the brave person; for the brave person's actions and feelings accord with what something is worth, and follow what reason prescribes. (NE, III, 1115b, 19-23).

There are some features of this definition that should be noticed. Firstly, virtues in general are defined by Aristotle as character

¹ Aristotle distinguishes between friendliness and friendship. Since this distinction is important for my thesis, I will talk more about it in Chapter II. This is not an exhausting list of all the Aristotelian virtues and its spheres. These, along with justice, are virtues of character, but there are also virtues of thought, such as prudence, understanding, wisdom, good deliberation, and comprehension (NE, Book VI).

traits that make the agent act for the right end, in the right way, at the right time. In other words, virtuous agents act for the right reasons. Some would say the right reasons are mostly defined by our nature (Anscombe: 1958, Foot: 2001), some that such reasons are mainly defined by the practices and moral traditions in which we are (MacIntyre: 1981), and some others still would argue that acting for the right reasons means the virtuous agent acts for moral principles, out of a sense of duty (Hursthouse: 2001²). It is also worth noticing that in virtue theory the “right reasons” are not typically viewed as reasons in one traditional sense, as the pure product of our rational faculty (as defined by Kant, 1787), but rather as a combination of beliefs, emotions, and understanding (Zagzebski, 2017; Hursthouse, 2001).

Secondly, and following from the previous point, Aristotle claims that in the virtuous agent actions and feelings accord with reason. This is what we mean when we say that virtues give the agent the appropriate motives to act well. Having the right motives to act amounts to knowing what to do and why, as well as actually desiring

² Hursthouse' (2001) position is interesting because she argues that virtue ethics is not as far from deontic ethics as philosophers usually claim. In this sense, it is possible to derive guide action principles from virtue ethics in the same way that it is possible to do it from Kantian ethics. She calls those principles V-principles, and says they would be something like: “act honesty”, “act justly”... and so on. According to her, “right action” is defined in terms of the virtuous agent. That is, a just action would be one that a just agent would, characteristically, do.

to do it. Part of this is included in the notion of having right reasons to act, in the sense that to know what to do and why is to know which good reasons we have to act. But having the right motives to act includes also to feel the appropriate emotions and the desire to do the right thing. This requires having emotions with rational content.

This means that in typical virtue theoretic accounts, emotions are cognitive. Emotions are conceived as constituted (or at least partially) by judgments that can be right or wrong. Emotions are seen as part of our rational nature. We are animals, and because of that we share some emotions with non-human animals, but since we are *rational* animals our emotions can also be rational - not merely driven by instinct. In Hursthouse' (2001) words:

The emotion that in the other animals is essentially connected to physical self-preservation or preservation of the species can be transformed in human beings into an emotion connected with the preservation of what is best, most worth preserving, in us and our species. And the correctness (or incorrectness) of our view of that is an aspect of our rationality. (p. 111).

Thirdly, for Aristotle virtues are defined as character traits or dispositions because they must be deeply rooted in the agent's character, and enable her to act well most of the time. To be courageous, for instance, an agent must respond courageously most of the time she faces fear. An isolated act performed with courage does not make its possessor a courageous agent.

Fourth, since having the right motives implies knowing what to do, virtues also enable their possessor to act well in the sense they give her a sort of effectiveness. An agent lacks virtue if the agent has just good intentions or good reasons to act well but most of the time she cannot bring about the good goal she intends. There must be a tendency to reach the goal when she acts. This is what Zagzebski calls the success component of virtue (1996: 100, 149). Although this feature could be controversial,³ following Zagzebski I think it is an important requisite in order to call someone a virtuous agent.

Fifth, virtues benefit their possessor (Hursthouse, 2001). Virtues are human excellences and their exercise is a constitutive part of human well-being or flourishing, because they express human nature (Foot, 2001). Such human nature is mainly defined by our being rational animals.⁴ Since human beings are political animals, they need to live with others in a socially organized way in order to fully develop their nature. The main difference between other social animals and human beings is our use of reason. There are many different forms of social human organization, and some argue there

³ See, for instance, W. P. Alston (2000) who claims that this feature cannot be an essential part of the concept of virtue because it only works for some virtues (p. 186).

⁴ According to Aristotle, man is by nature a “zoon politikon”, a political animal (The Politics, I, ii, 1253a3). In (1999) A. McIntyre claims that such condition of being rational and political animals makes us also dependent one from another. We cannot be fully human if we do not live with others.

are character strengths or virtues necessary to be part of them, which could be relative to those forms of organizations (practices and traditions, see MacIntyre 1981). Nevertheless, although *the exercise of the virtues* could differ in different contexts, *the definition of virtue* is not relative to those contexts. Such a definition derives from the notion of human flourishing or well-being (Nussbaum, 1987)⁵. Since virtues are excellences of human nature – which is mostly defined by our rationality and social dependency - their exercise benefits their possessors by enabling them to lead good human lives.

Finally, it is important to notice that the notions of human nature and human well-being are not absolute, but aim at objectivity. In a sense, they should not make us think there is only one way of flourishing or leading a good life. For a person to flourish she does not need to live in a particular place or within a specific society, community or tradition; nor be an intellectual, a politician or a monk. Nevertheless, there is also a sense in which we could say that there is only one way in which a good human life could be lived: rationally (Hursthouse, 2001). In this sense, the concepts of human nature and

⁵ There are some exceptions from this characterization. L. Zagzebski, for instance, proposes a definition of virtue that is not dependent upon the concept of human nature (L. Zagzebski, 2017).

human well-being are objective. In a broad sense they determine what is rational for humans to do and what is not.

2. Kinds of virtues

According to Aristotle (NE) there are two kinds of virtues: moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues are defined as character traits that make their possessors care about good thinking, judgment, knowledge, and understanding. Moral virtues are defined as dispositions to have the motives to behave rightly, e.g. justly, courageously, or compassionately.

Although there are many virtues in both groups, the issue of distinguishing the intellectual from the moral raises some pressing questions. How can we distinguish a moral from an intellectual virtue? Is there really a substantial difference? How do particular intellectual virtues relate to particular moral virtues, or how does the relation go in general? We could group potential answers to the question of whether there is a clear distinction between moral and intellectual virtues as follows:

1. Moral and intellectual virtues are not different. Although we talk of moral and intellectual virtues it is just a matter of language, but there is ultimately only one type of virtue. This seems to be Socrates' position, which Baehr (2011) calls *the reductive thesis*.

2. Moral and intellectual virtues are not different in a substantial way, and one type of virtue is a proper subset of the other. This is the *subset thesis*, according to Baehr's (2011) taxonomy. Zagzebski's view (1996) fits here, because she claims intellectual virtues are a subset of moral virtues. In other words, "Intellectual virtues are best viewed as forms of moral virtue" (p. 139).

3. Moral and intellectual virtues are different in a substantial way, but a) they are interrelated (Baehr himself holds this position that he calls *moderated position*), or b) they are independent (independence thesis). This means there are individuals with moral virtues without intellectual virtue, and individuals with intellectual virtue without moral virtue. This is the *liberal position*, according to Baehr (2011)⁶.

In this section I will argue for a variation of the second position. I think intellectual and moral virtues are interdependent and only superficially different. They are different because their aims are different, but they are interdependent because their ends are components of the human good.

First of all, they are so closely related that for many of them we have the same names (moral and intellectual honesty, moral and

⁶ Although this seems to be a common position among people, I could not find a scholar who overtly supports this view.

intellectual fairness, moral and intellectual courage); second, it seems that most of the time the exercise of a moral virtue requires an intellectual virtue, and the exercise of an intellectual virtue requires of a moral one; third, in an Aristotelian sense, moral virtue requires *phronesis*, which he characterized as an intellectual virtue. As a result of this, I think the general relation between moral and intellectual virtues is one of interdependence. That is, they are different in a certain sense, but one kind of virtue requires of the other in order to be a proper virtue of its kind.

When Aristotle was trying to name the virtues, he realized that at his time they didn't have names for all of them. So, for some he made up names and for others he simply left them nameless. Even now, one could question whether we have the same names for certain moral and intellectual virtues just out of a lack in language, or whether this is mostly a matter of the nature of the virtues themselves and their relationships. I think some moral and intellectual virtues share the same name because they are so closely related, they share a common root. We talk of moral and intellectual honesty, moral and intellectual fairness, moral and intellectual courage, and so on because although we recognize a difference in the manifestation of each virtue, we at the same time recognize they share a common basis.

Let's analyze courage, for instance. It was originally placed by Aristotle (NE) among the individual virtues of character, along with temperance, generosity, magnificence, and magnanimity, the virtue concerned with small honors, mildness, friendliness, truthfulness, wit, and justice. He claims courage is a mean between feelings of fear and confidence, but not about everything: there are sorts of frightening conditions that concern the brave person. Although he initially restricted those conditions to "the most frightening thing... in the finest conditions," which according to him is death in war, his subsequent discussion of courage allows us to think that its scope is actually wider. Again, take Aristotle's definition of courage we already gave (Ch. I, 1). He says:

... Whoever stands firm against the right things and fears the right things, for the right end, in the right way, at the right time, and is correspondingly confident, is the brave person; for the brave person's actions and feelings accord with what something is worth, and follow what reason prescribes. (NE, III, 1115b, 19-23).

I suggest we could say that a person is courageous when she risks something important for what she has good reasons to think it is a good cause. Obviously, the question now is how to know when those conditions are met. Is it brave when a man who likes hunting for sport has to fight in the darkness against a wild animal? He is certainly risking his life and facing death, but I doubt this could be properly called courage, at least on the Aristotelian view. He is not facing death

for a fine cause, he just likes to hunt and he does not need to be doing it. Only if he needed to hunt for survival could it count as courage, because the concept seems to involve more than only overcoming fear and facing death. I think Aristotle claims death in war is death in the finest conditions for an important reason. It is the fighting in defense of worthy people, ideas, and values that really counts as courage. Interpretations according to which his definition of courage states that only actual soldiers or warriors can be courageous are misleading. I suggest that “war” here should be taken as fights we have to go through in our lives, and “death” as the possible consequences of those fights.

Imagine now someone who is standing against his community going into war because, among other things, he believes political means must be exhausted before using military force, and because war is a terrible waste of both economic and human resources. Although he thinks the values of his community should be protected, he also believes this is not the right method. Because of that, he leads campaigns and demonstrations against the government and those who support war. Could we consider him courageous? I think the answer is yes, even in an Aristotelian sense. He is courageous trying to avoid war because war is not always (and maybe only in few cases at this time) a good solution to problems among communities. So, I

take it to be a good cause, a worthy end. Mostly, standing actively against what his government and the majority of the members of his community take to be the right solution is difficult. It is also a fight, a struggle of a different nature. Those who stand against what their community think is the right path also have to face fear and take the risks of being isolated and losing their jobs, prestige, families and friends, and even their own lives. This example, some would say, is a good example of the moral virtue of courage.

Now think of a scientist who makes a challenging hypothesis to solve a theoretical problem within a specific area of mathematics. She works tirelessly to provide evidence to support her hypothesis without success for three decades, at the end of which she finally finds the conclusive evidence needed to demonstrate it. Could we also say she is courageous even though the case does not involve war or facing death? Again, I think the answer is yes. Her formulation of the challenging hypothesis, her sticking to it for so many years despite the fact of not finding conclusive proof, and the fact that she keeps trying to find it shows her courage. She risked her prestige as a scientist and had to face frustration for so long. Examples of this sort are examples of intellectual courage.

In short, we could say that a person is courageous when she risks something important (her connection with others – family,

friends, colleagues or members of the community, her belongings – material or symbolic, or even her life) for what she has good reasons to think is a good cause. This is the common root of both kinds of virtue. But it is called *moral courage* when the end is moral, such as the case of the man against war, and *intellectual courage* when the end is epistemic (such as the search of truth, knowledge or understanding), as in the case of the scientist. They differ in the end.

There is a second sense in which moral and intellectual virtues seem to be deeply related. In most of the cases, one kind of virtue is necessary for having a virtue of the other kind. The case for intellectual virtues as necessary conditions for moral virtues appears more straightforward, since any instance of moral virtue requires at least to get facts right. That is, a moral agent needs attentiveness, truthfulness, sensitivity to details, open-mindedness, and some other intellectual virtues in order to know when, where, why, and how to act because otherwise her action will not be a proper instantiation of a moral virtue. You will need to care about truth in order to have the moral virtue of honesty, and you cannot be compassionate or generous in a situation in which you really do not know what is going on. As Zagzebski claims, since virtue is a success concept,

No one has the virtue of fairness or courage or compassion or generosity without generally being in cognitive contact with the aspect of reality handled by the respective virtue. Otherwise, one could not be reliably successful. We may make allowances for some

mistakes in beliefs or perceptions in the possession of a moral virtue, but no one who regularly misperceives the situation or has mistaken beliefs about what should or should not be done in such cases can be said to possess the moral virtue that governs cases of that type (...) Being reasonably intelligent within a certain area of life is part of having almost any moral virtue (p. 149).

On the other hand, we can see that there are also several ways in which intellectual virtues logically or causally require moral virtues. Moral vices such as envy or pride could hinder the cultivation of intellectual virtues because knowledge is a social product and the search for understanding requires other's works, perspectives and support. In the same sense, an agent who seeks to develop his intellectual virtues will need moral virtues such as patience, perseverance, and courage in order to attain the truth, and search for knowledge and understanding. Take, for instance, open-mindedness as understood by Wayne Riggs (2010). According to him, "open-mindedness is primarily an attitude toward oneself as a believer" (p. 172) which requires one to acknowledge and to be aware of one's fallibility as a believer. This attitude requires the moral virtue of humility.

Finally, a third way in which we could think of a relationship between intellectual and moral virtues is paying attention to the Aristotelian suggestion according to which *phronesis* is needed to exercise moral virtue, and *phronesis* is an intellectual virtue. According

to him, *phronesis* is “a truth-attaining intellectual quality concerned with doing and with the things that are good for human beings” (NE VI.5). Although there is a large debate about Aristotle’s placing this virtue in the rational part of the soul, as well as about his division of the soul into rational and non-rational parts, I think that the function he gives to *phronesis* is illuminating. *Phronesis* commands when and how a specific virtue is needed (not only if intellectual or moral but also which particular virtue within each cluster of virtues). I picture its role as similar to an orchestra’s conductor. The performance of a good piece of music will require that every single musician knows how to play the instrument well, but also that they follow the conductor’s indications accurately. The role of a good musician in the performance of a symphony, for instance, will be similar to the role of each virtue: they must do it well individually but also depend upon one another in order to sound like a symphony. And although every musician must know when and how to perform their parts, they must also follow the conductor’s guidance. In this sense, I agree with Zagzebski in that *phronesis* is a higher-order virtue that governs both intellectual and moral virtues in the same way.

In summary, my position would be another way of interpreting the second position above, according to which moral and intellectual virtues are not different in a substantial way. I distance myself from

Zagzebski's position in that I do not hold the subset thesis because I do not think one type of virtue is a subset of the other.

I conceive moral and intellectual virtues as different but not in a substantial way, and I think each type of virtue needs the other in order to be what it is. This does not imply that having one virtue is having all of them,⁷ but rather that what we call a moral virtue such as moral courage, for instance, would require some intellectual virtues (such as truthfulness), and that an intellectual virtue such as open-mindedness would require some moral virtues (or at least one, humility). My guess is that it is so because an important part of the definition of a character trait as a virtue (and not simply as a skill or ability) is its wholeness. In other words, maybe a virtue is a virtue because it has both moral and intellectual excellences as its components, and also because it must be connected to human flourishing.

⁷ This would be what has been called the unity thesis. There are two main formulations of this doctrine. One of them states that courage, justice, temperance... are just different names to refer the same thing, because virtue is one thing. The other formulation claims that in order to have courage, for instance, one needs all the other virtues; so having one amounts to have them all. In the *Protagoras*, the main Socratic dialogue where this issue is discussed by Plato, Socrates asks Protagoras whether he thinks the relationship among all those virtues and the whole virtue is like parts of gold (first formulation) or like parts in a face (second formulation). There is still a great debate whether Socrates holds the thesis in any of its formulations. For a good treatment in favor of the idea that Socrates holds it under the first formulation or *identity view*, see, for instance Terry Penner (1973). For a good argumentation in favor of the idea that Plato holds it under the second formulation or *equivalent view*, see Gregory Vlastos (1981).

As a consequence of this analysis, when I talk here about the cultivation of virtue I am not talking about a specific virtue or set of virtues, but rather I am using the expression as a generic notion that could encompass either what is usually called moral virtue or what is usually called intellectual virtue. Although in Chapter IV I talk of “moral development” and “virtue cultivation” as part of the same process, it must be clear that I think moral development goes hand in hand with cognitive development and vice versa. So my interest is more for the cultivation of virtue as a sort of complex of capacities, borrowing Nancy Sherman’s (1991) words:

A comprehensive account of the acquisition of Aristotelian virtue would require going through the full range of virtues implicit in goodness, and saying something about what the subconstituents of each virtue are and how they might be acquired, e.g. for courage, how fear must be felt but confronted, the sorts of circumstances and beliefs appropriate to the right response, exposure to which might cultivate that response. Different passions will be involved in different virtues, and different circumstances will be appropriate for the exercise of each. The opportunities and resources for cultivating one virtue need not coincide with the opportunities for cultivating another. Some passions might be more resistant to reform than others, and some vices more blameworthy (1119a22–32). Though Aristotle himself undertakes this sort of extensive accounting of the virtues, I cannot go through it in detail. Rather, what I wish to do is to consider virtue in a general way as a complex of capacities—perceptual, affective, and deliberative—and suggest how these capacities are cultivated. (p.166)

In what follows, then, I will consider some ancient and contemporary views on the question whether virtue in this general sense can be taught, and if so, how.

3. Can virtue be taught?

3.1. Some ancient views

3.1.1. Socrates/Plato: virtue cannot be taught, but can be prompted

The *Meno* is the main dialogue in which Socrates tries to answer the question whether virtue can be taught, and it marks the beginning of many debates in Western philosophy about this subject. If we just take what the text superficially shows, Socrates' answer is negative: virtue cannot be taught because it is a gift from the gods. Aristotle, on the other side, claims intellectual virtue can be taught, and moral virtue can be brought about by habituation. How should we understand these answers? What can they tell us now? I think good answers to these questions need to take into account different implicit nuances in the concept of virtue and the way we think of something being taught. After analyzing those notions, my answer is "yes, virtue can be taught."

When Meno asks Socrates whether virtue can be taught, his initial answer is that he does not even know what virtue is and because of that he does not know any subsidiary thing about it. As a consequence, Socrates proposes Meno to investigate what virtue is in the first place.⁸ At this point Meno poses his paradox – or “the learner paradox” - in which he asks how it could be possible to look for something that one does not know, since one doesn’t know what one is looking for.⁹

Socrates answers that since the soul is immortal, it has seen all the things in the underworld and, because of that, it can “learn” or remember everything about virtue or other things when correctly prompted.¹⁰ But then Meno asks again whether among the things in the soul virtue is teachable or not. This time Socrates goes a little bit

⁸ What has been called “the Socratic Fallacy”, which consists in saying that it is impossible to say something about a thing if we do not have a definition of such a thing with which we can start in the first place. For more on this see Geach, 1966, who take this to be an objection to Socratic philosophy. See also Beversluis and Vlastos, 1994 for a more charitable view of the Socratic position.

⁹ Some interpreters say the paradox depends on an equivocation of a key term or clause (McCabe, 2009). That is, that maybe Plato is distinguishing here between tacit or manifest knowledge (Bluck, 1964; Mathews, 1999). Some others say that what Plato wants to highlight here is a fallacy or ambiguity that is lying behind the surface, that the paradox is employed to introduce important philosophical problems (Benson, 2015).

¹⁰ This is Plato’s theory of recollection, which can be found mainly in *Phaedo* and *Meno*. In the *Meno*, the conversation with the slave boy is meant to show the existence of prenatal knowledge and the possibility of self-discovery if someone is properly prompted. According to Plato, what can actualize such possibility is the application of the method of hypothesis. For more on this, see Scott, 2006; Mathews, 1999; Fine, 1992, 2004, 2010.

further than before and ventures the hypothesis that if virtue is a kind of knowledge it is teachable; and at first sight it seems to be so, he says, because virtue is knowledge of good and bad. Nevertheless, as usual in his dialogues, the refutation of this hypothesis comes soon: if something is teachable, then there must be people who teach it and people who learn it, but there are not teachers of virtue. Those sophists who say they can teach virtue in fact cannot do it; moreover, worthy people themselves cannot teach it to their own children. If there are no teachers of virtue then virtue is not knowledge and cannot be taught. Then, virtue must be right opinion that has not been taught. His conclusion is that if virtue is not knowledge, and cannot be taught, statesmen who do the right things, as well as soothsayers and prophets, must be called “divine” because they assert that they have right opinions, without having knowledge at all: “...Virtue would be neither an inborn quality nor taught, but comes to those who possess it as a gift from the gods which is not accompanied by understanding” (100a-b).

Although this is what the text shows and the most common interpretations are skeptical, saying either that this conclusion is an expression of Socrates’ ignorance¹¹ or that he really thinks virtue

¹¹ Vlastos’ (1991) position is that this is a transitional dialogue and expresses mostly Plato’s views, but fails to give an answer to the question whether virtue can be

cannot be taught because it is a gift from god,¹² I think another interpretation of the text is possible.¹³ I will dare to formulate a bold hypothesis for this interpretation, even though I have no textual evidence now for it. If virtue is knowledge and knowledge is recollection, and our souls can recall something when properly prompted, Socrates is asking what the appropriate way to prompt our souls is.¹⁴ Maybe he thinks there are no formal teachers of virtue (at

taught. Under this skeptic interpretation, the *Meno's* conclusion is an expression of Socrates' ignorance. It seems that those who think Socrates commits "the Socratic Fallacy" (P. Geach, 1966) when he talks of a concept without giving a clear definition of it support this position.

¹² An interesting argument in this direction is presented in Mark Reuter (2001). He claims there are other Platonic texts (the Seventh Letter, Plato's discussion of the education of the philosopher in Republic 6, the Laws 715ae7-716b7) that support the interpretation according to which Plato believes in divine providence in this issue. In other words, he argues that for Plato goodness is a gift from God. Reuter also claims that "This hypothesis has been made in recent times by Morrow (1960) and in antiquity by Alcinous (Louis and Whittaker 1990)." (p. 91, note 34).

¹³ In fact, although Mark Reuter (2001) supports the part of the skeptic interpretation according to which Plato's view is that in the path to virtue there is divine intervention, he denies the skeptic conclusion scholars derive from it. That is, he claims this does not mean there is no human responsibility in becoming virtuous. According to him, although in Plato's view goodness (or virtue in general) is a divine gift, it still needs to be cultivated and can be taught: "...the remedy for vice and the road to goodness will be found in the effort to become like god. This goal is attainable for human beings because we already have a portion of the divine present within our rational psyche. Neither god nor this gift is something imposed on us from the outside. Rather the recognition of this gift, its cultivation, and development, represent a type of understanding. It is the recognition of our divine origins that give us our impulse to take up philosophy (cf. Republic 611e4) and our love of wisdom that prescribes the path of purification whereby we attain goodness (cf. Phaedo 69a-e). How far down this path we go remains up to us". (p. 94).

¹⁴ A similar interpretation would be that of D. Scott (2006). He claims that according to Plato real virtue comes by recollection and the virtue of politicians, "shade virtue", is a divine gift. In the same vein, G. Boter (2008) claims Plato's main aim

least in his time), but this does not mean that virtue cannot be learned. Moreover, I think it is possible to read the conclusion of the dialogue as an application of his irony. It is so difficult to believe that a man who devoted all his life to the task of trying to make others think about what it means to live a good life did so while thinking it was pointless. His life, as well as his death as described in the Apology, seem to show he believed reflection could make us better as human beings, and eventually could make us virtuous.

It is reasonable to believe that the conversation with the slave illustrates Socrates thinks there are no teachers (of virtue or anything) if we understand teaching as giving something to someone that she did not have before. But maybe he believes it is possible to teach something in the sense of helping others to remember it. So what I suggest is to interpret his question like asking whether somebody can help us to remember virtue. I think his answer would be yes.

Nevertheless, it is important to make some remarks about my suggestion for this interpretation of Socrates' position. First of all, Socrates could be calling attention to the fact that although the process of teaching and learning in general seems to entail a direct

with the Meno's conclusion is to show (via the dialogue with the slave) that any knowledge, including knowledge of virtue, is possible only by means of the *elenchus*.

relation of a teacher and a learner, it is not necessarily so. This interpretation allows us to say that there could be processes such as those of teaching and learning virtue in which there are learners without being formal teachers of it. Someone could become virtuous through her own experience, reflection, and searching. This does not mean, however, that there have not been helpers or “teachers” in her learning of virtue. Her experience is an experience of living with others, trying to know them, to understand them, to make a better life among them, and in this sense it is possible to say they have been “teachers of virtue.” Her own reflection is also penetrated by her experience with others with whom she lives her life, but also by the experience she gets from others who lived in other times (from books, movies...). Her search of virtue is helped in many ways by the searching of others.

Second, in this sense, saying that there are teachers of virtue does not necessarily mean there is direct and deliberated instruction. That is, the teacher need not be present, or she could be present and, nonetheless, teach us something without knowing it or even without intention. In other words, the teaching of virtue needs not be

intentional (Müller, unpublished). I think this is so because we also learn through other's experience, through their example.¹⁵

According to Anselm W. Müller (unpublished), for instance, in order to become virtuous human beings we need what he calls "ethical upbringing," which from his point of view must start with children and be done mainly by parents. But what is most interesting in his point of view is his rejection of what he calls an "intentionalist view of upbringing." In his words, there is a mistake in "our tendency to expect *activity* or *action* where there is a verb – a predicate that attributes a kind of *doing*. More particularly, we tend to think that if children are to *learn* from their parents how to act and to live, the parents must somehow *teach* them how to act and to live; and this teaching must, it seems, consist in characteristic intentional *action* or *activity* performed with a further intention to effect an increase in virtue in the child" (p. 4). Applying a Wittgensteinian analysis, he suggests rather to look at the *grammar of upbringing* in order to understand it better. He claims ethical upbringing is a kind of *poiesis*, but different from paradigmatic forms of doing, like playing violin for instance, in the following senses:

¹⁵ This connects with Linda Zagzebski's suggestion (2012) according to which virtue can be taught pointing out moral exemplars. In this sense narratives, both real and fictional, would constitute the main source of teaching virtue.

1). Ethical upbringing requires temporal continuity because it is a responsibility, not an activity. While a violinist who is producing bad sounds could say she is not actually *playing* but testing a new string or tuning her instrument, it doesn't make any sense if a parent gives a similar answer. He cannot say something like: "I am not actually bringing up the child but testing her reactions or testing a new pedagogical theory."

2). It does not make any sense either if a parent says: "Oh, I am not trying to bring her up, I am trying to do something else," because whether he brings up the child or not does not depend on his intention. Although the quality of the upbringing may vary depending on the intention, the fact of the upbringing itself doesn't depend upon the parent's intention. Intention is not a necessary component of upbringing.

3). Evaluation of the agent is also different in this case. The violinist could say she is making bad sounds because she intends to do so, but she can do it better if she wants. This sort of answer would put a parent even in a worse position.

4). There are not "acts of upbringing" and it does not consist in any such acts (or "educational measures"). Bringing up a child would imply a) performing certain actions but also not to perform others; b) that there are not "universal" kinds of actions that must be performed;

c). that since children learn mainly from the upbringer's ethical example, it is in part a matter of unintended behavior; d) that although there are some intentional actions, they need not be actions performed with the further intention of influencing the character of the child; and e) that you have a general conception of what kind of character should be developed, but in general it is not so.

As a consequence, he says the grammar of *bringing up* a child works in the same way than *acting well* does, at least in one sense: "Aristotle explains this sense of *acting* by saying that the inherent *telos* of *pratein* is its own goodness rather than anything produced by and separable from it. It is an *immanent telos*: it is nothing beyond *acting in a certain way* – namely: well (*eu pratein*) – or, roughly speaking, the practice of the ethical virtues and practical wisdom" (p. 10). In this sense, he claims, bringing up a child has the same grammar as acting, and the ethical upbringing would in fact consist in acting well, in practicing virtues.

Finally, coming back to our original question (i.e., whether virtue can be taught), Müller concludes that if his analysis is correct and the intentionalist view of upbringing is wrong, then you cannot be said to teach virtue when you are bringing up a child well, in the sense that you are not *doing* something additional. Nevertheless, he claims moral education must start early in childhood; regarding the institution

or people that should do it, he claims it must initiate in the family, preferably with the parents; and finally he considers some of the circumstances under which the development of moral virtue could be facilitated: an environment with moral examples and good interactions.

Müller's analysis of the grammar of upbringing shows teaching virtue does not require intentionality. In other words, I think it supports the idea that having the intention to teach virtue is not necessary nor sufficient for teaching virtue. In sum, there is a sense in which according to Socrates virtue cannot be taught, if we understand this as the transferring of information from a teacher to a learner in a direct and intentional way. But I suggest Socrates' position could be interpreted as saying that although it seems there are not formal teachers of virtue (at least in his time), there are nevertheless people and experiences that prompt our souls in a way that make us remember virtue.

3.1.2. Aristotle: virtue can be learned through habituation and teaching

Aristotle defines virtue as a stable disposition of character that makes its possessor know what the right thing to do is in a specific circumstance. That is, it enables her to know the "mean" or middle point between contrary vices. And as we mentioned earlier, he also

argues that there are two kinds of virtues: moral and intellectual. In regard to their cultivation, it seems there is a sort of common ground for both kinds of virtues.

First, there is what Aristotle calls “natural virtue” or “proto-virtue” (intellectual and moral) that must be cultivated in order to become proper virtue. He says: “...virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit.” (1103a25-26). Natural virtue, also called “childish virtue” because it is said to be already in most children, is like a natural tendency in human beings to be inclined to do the right thing. It is not proper or complete virtue because it does not involve yet choice and practical intelligence or wisdom.¹⁶

Second, such cultivation has to do mainly with pleasure and pain, with learning to feel joy and grief for the appropriate things: “... virtue of character is about pleasures and pains. For pleasure causes us to do base actions, and pain causes us to abstain from fine ones” (1104b9-11). The virtuous person finds pleasure in acting virtuously, which distinguishes her from the continent, who does the right thing but whose reasons and emotions are not in accord with one another.

¹⁶ For more on this notion, see Hayden Ramsay (2010), where he argues that the notion on *natural virtue* could be a solution for some problems within the unity of the virtues thesis.

In the continent there is a struggle. Since people who are continent do not find pleasure in fine actions, they fight with their feelings.¹⁷

Third, such cultivation must start early in life. Aristotle claims: "...we need to have had the appropriate upbringing – right from early youth, as Plato says - to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education" (1104b11-13).

Despite this common ground for the cultivation of both kinds of virtues, though, Aristotle seems to introduce a distinction. He claims that "Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching; that is why it needs experience and time. Virtue of character results from habit..." (NE 1103a15-18). Someone could suggest that this means within the Aristotelian view intellectual virtues require teachers whereas moral virtues do not. It is so, the argument could go, because like Socrates, Aristotle thinks moral virtue cannot be taught. Nevertheless, this interpretation would not only go against other textual evidence that show Aristotle thinks moral virtue can (and must) be taught,¹⁸ but would also imply that moral virtues do not require experience or time either. Is this the case?

¹⁷ See Philippa Foot (1978) and Julia Annas (2003). Karen E. Stohr (2003) calls this "the harmony thesis", and argues that such thesis, as widely understood, is mistaken because "...there are occasions where a virtuous agent will find right action painful and difficult." (p. 339).

¹⁸ There are several references to moral education and teaching virtue along NE, and chapter 9 of Book X is specifically about this.

First, by definition habits are dispositions to act in certain ways that need both time and experience to develop. There is no other way to acquire a habit than just doing what the habit consists in. Second, although habits *simpliciter* are formed by repetitive acts to which human beings become “accustomed,” and because of that some would say they do not require being taught/learned from/by others, it nevertheless seems that moral virtues need some sort of teacher.¹⁹ So what could be the distinction Aristotle is making here?

Despite the fact that there are good reasons to think that in his view both intellectual and moral virtues work together in a fully virtuous person,²⁰ maybe he sees an important difference in the way both kinds of virtues are cultivated. He should not be interpreted as claiming intellectual virtues can be taught and moral virtues cannot, but rather as claiming that the two kinds of virtues might be taught and learned differently.

Leaving aside Aristotle’s reference to time and experience, since it makes sense to assume that both kinds of virtues require them, again we should pay more attention to what he says: “Virtue of

¹⁹ As we saw, it does not have to be a formal teacher, not even a person. It could be an experience or a situation. It must be clear also that Aristotle’s claim that virtue comes through habituation does not mean it is a mechanical learning. See Nancy Sherman (2003).

²⁰ As we explained in the previous section referring to his notion of *phronesis*.

thought arises and grows *mostly* from teaching... Virtue of character results from habit..." (NE 1103a15-18, my emphasis). And at the end of his NE, he distinguishes again between "habit" and "argument and teaching" (1179b20-32), and gives priority to habit over teaching and argument:

...some think it is nature that makes people good; some think it is habit; some that it is teaching [...] Arguments and teaching surely do not prevail on everyone, but the soul of the student needs to have been prepared by habits for enjoying and hating finely, like ground that is to nourish the seed. (1179b20-27).

Aristotle seems to be claiming that intellectual virtues are more likely to be learned through direct teaching whereas moral virtues are not. Maybe we can shed some light over this issue by looking at Burbules and Peters account of two different pedagogies.²¹ Deriving pedagogical implications from Wittgenstein's Tractatus, they claim there are two kinds of different but complementary pedagogies expressed in Wittgenstein's work: one they call *pedagogy of the sense* in which precision about the language and the possibility of verification is fundamental, the other they call *pedagogy of the nonsense* where language is not expected to represent reality. They claim that this

²¹ Nicholas Burbules and Michael Peters, "Tractarian Pedagogies: Sense and Nonsense." <http://faculty.education.illinois.edu/burbules/syllabi/Materials/tlp.html>. Retrieved Feb. 29, 2016.

distinction, illuminated by Wittgenstein's "*of what can be said*" and "*of what cannot be said but shown*," tells us that there are subjects about which we cannot talk but we can show or be shown. Instead of verifiable propositions, the pedagogy of nonsense uses as its resources metaphors, similes, allusions, puzzles, paradoxical questions, obscure anecdotes, aphorisms and so on. My claim is that this interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* not only supports the idea that teaching virtue need not be intentional but also that it need not have a formal teacher or even a person who explicitly *does* something. In a certain sense, different experiences in life work as those resources do: they "show" us what cannot be said.

What this interpretation lacks in direct textual evidence, it gains in explanatory power: Aristotle may not have actually believed that the cultivation of both intellectual and moral virtues share a component that is mostly learned indirectly, a component that cannot be said but shown by those who help us in this process, but we can understand it in this way.²² Both kind of virtues require habituation, time, and

²² I am arguing here that different experiences and people help us in the process of virtue cultivation, but the goal of my dissertation is to argue in favor of the idea that character friends are fundamental in it. I am doing this because the traditional view is that virtue is cultivated mainly by imitating or emulating a role model. L. Zagzebski, for instance, claims: "I propose that the stages of learning the intellectual virtues are exactly parallel to the stages of learning the moral virtues as described by Aristotle. They begin with the imitation of virtuous persons, require practice which develops certain habits of feeling and acting, and usually include an in-between stage of intellectual self-control (overcoming intellectual *akrasia*)

experience, as well as the development of good judgement. The process initiates with habituation, but as many have suggested, such habituation is not in any case a mechanical process (J. Annas, 2011; Sherman, 1982, 2003). How it should go is still a matter of discussion, and part of the aim of this dissertation is to suggest a way of complementing the traditional view about it, according to which this process is mainly guided by role models, conceived most of the time as superiors to the learners.

3. 2. Some contemporary views

Virtue theory in Western philosophy traces back to Plato and Aristotle, and the theory had an important place in philosophy over time, but during the modern period interest in it was lost. Although the concept of virtue never disappeared completely from the philosophical scene, in modern philosophy its role was almost always subsidiary of some other concepts.²³ In contemporary philosophy, the rebirth of the focus on virtue as a central moral concept started the second half of the twentieth century, first in moral philosophy with Elizabeth

parallel to the stage of moral self-control in the acquisition of a moral virtue. In both cases the imitation is of a person who has *phronesis*." (1996: 150).

²³ In Kantian moral philosophy, for instance, the main concept is that of a good will, and virtue is defined as "the moral strength of a *human being's* will in fulfilling his *duty*" (Kant, 1996, 6:405). It is important to notice, however, that there have been recent reinterpretations of Kantian moral theory as a virtue ethics theory. See, for instance, Nancy Sherman (1997).

Anscombe (1958), and then in epistemology with Ernest Sosa (1980). Both Anscombe and Sosa proposed to bring the concept back to the center of the scene. Since then, virtue ethics theories define concepts such as right act, good state of affairs, good aims, and good life, among others, by reference to the concept of virtue (Hursthouse, 1999; Zagzebski, forthcoming). And virtue epistemology theories define their epistemic ends and methods by reference to the concept of virtue (Sosa, 1991; McDowell, 1994; Zagzebski, 1996).

It seems that the mere justification of this shift of focus is so contentious for contemporary philosophy that some important issues have not been treated enough yet. This is the case, for instance, for the question of how to become virtuous. Once someone is convinced that the shift to focusing on virtue is worthwhile, how can she become virtuous or help others to do so?

There are, nevertheless, some interesting treatments of this subject in contemporary philosophy. All of them give a positive answer to the question whether virtue can be taught, and give some indications about how it could be done. Almost all of them talk in terms of a teacher, a master, a model... teaching or facilitating the process of pupils who are learning virtue, by way of giving them the opportunity to “see” and practice the relevant actions that would eventually become habitual, and then embedded in their characters. In general

terms, they hold some sort of variation of the role modeling approach, according to which virtue is acquired by emulating role models, and where those role models are usually conceived of as superior in some relevant respect to the learners. Although I think this approach is right in that we need a model in order to learn and cultivate virtue, I contend it is not sufficient. I will argue in the following chapters that we learn virtue not only from models – usually conceived in the role modeling approach as superiors - but also from our relationships with non-superiors.

The most widely-accepted answer to the question about how virtue is taught/learned is by habituation. This answer is popular not only because it is held by Aristotle (NE 1103a15-18, 1103b28-1104b39), but also because it connects habituation with the very nature of virtue. This is important because, as Julia Annas (2011) claims, our idea of how we learn virtue is inherent to the concept of virtue. Since virtue is conceived as a character trait that is reliable in leading its possessor to act rightly, virtue is mostly a matter of becoming habituated to respond to people and situations in a certain way. This response attempts to integrate the right act, the right motives, and the right circumstances. In general, in virtue theory *motives* amounts to reasons and emotions.

Although this general view seems to be held in common agreement among virtue theorists, the way they conceive this process of habituation has several divergent points. Some virtue theorists think habituation mostly consists in developing our practical reasoning by way of acting and giving/receiving reasons. That is, by acting right and knowing why something is the right thing to do (Annas, 2011). Others claim that since acting virtuously is having the appropriate feelings, such habituation must consist mainly in the education of emotions (Hursthouse, 2001). In a similar vein, another account says that since emotions are reasons to act, habituation for virtue would consist in the education of emotions that constitute good reasons to act. The most important of those emotions is, according to Zagzebski (2017), the emotion of admiration. Some others hold a sort of synthesis between these two elements, and say habituation is a critical and reflective practice that evolves from basic cultivation of affections throughout filial attachments, goes to a more active cultivation of rational capacities where the help of tutors and inspiration from models are crucial, and eventually culminates with the emergence of full rationality (Nancy Sherman, 1982, 1991). I will consider the first three accounts in this chapter.

3.2.1. Julia Annas: learning virtue as learning a practical skill

Julia Annas (2011) argues that virtues are like certain skills, because exercising a virtue involves practical reasoning similar to that required to exercise a practical skill, such as playing piano or tennis. A virtue is a reliable disposition that needs to be learned by habituation, but a habituation that makes the practitioner more intelligent rather than routinized. That is, her account does not apply to every skill (such as those that make part of our everyday life, many physical routines, rituals or abilities that we usually call skills, or those in which natural talent has a big contribution), but to those skills in which two features are present: the need to learn and the drive to aspire.

Since Annas conceives the drive to aspire as a constant seeking of understanding of what one is doing, a desire to improve it and to do it by oneself, I think this feature is the most important for her purpose of showing that virtues are like some skills. It allows her to say that both virtues and those skills are learned through practice, but cannot be routinized. This means that the skilled person, as well as the virtuous person, will become so by doing what they are learning, and will improve with practice. At the beginning of their journey, they will need to think carefully about what they are doing, but eventually they won't need to think about it all the time.

This doesn't mean however, that their acts are mechanized. A person who is learning how to play piano, for instance, needs to think about every single one of her movements. With practice, she will eventually become better and will not need to think constantly about them. Nevertheless, her mastery at her performance will depend on her playing in a non-mechanical way. If she plays mechanistically she is not a master at playing piano. In the same way, a person learns to be courageous by doing courageous acts, and at the beginning that could imply that she needs to think carefully about what this means and analyze carefully every single situation in which she thinks she is required to be courageous. But the courageous agent does not need to go through all this process anymore because having the virtue is knowing where and when to apply it, and why. Despite this, both the master at playing piano and the courageous person would be able to explain what they have done and why, when asked.

This is fundamental to the concept of virtue, since acting virtuously requires that the agent act for the right reasons and having the appropriate feelings. So the drive to aspire leads the skilled person and the virtuous person to seek to get better at the practice, and to know what they are doing and why. This feature of some skills and of virtues also allows Annas to distinguish between the learner and the expert. In order to get the skill, the learner needs to trust the teacher

and the context in which she is learning. She must follow what the teacher says. Nevertheless, she needs to ask herself why the teacher does and says what she does and says. That is, the learner needs to have this drive to aspire that leads her to try to understand what they are doing, and needs to figure out which things of what the teacher does are essential to the skill and which ones are not. But she must also know that in order to achieve mastery she has to detach herself at some point from the teacher. She has to do it by herself. Otherwise she will be just copying the teacher. This will require from the expert or teacher not only that she tells the learner what to do and how, but also that she gives him reasons of why they are doing what they are doing. Those reasons function as explanations and, because of that, require some degree of articulacy.

Nevertheless, it is important to notice that Annas claims we already have some virtues (and vices) by the time we start thinking and talking about virtues. Parents, teachers, and neighbors have taught us (or at least have tried to) how to be loyal, brave, and honest. Their examples gave us some sort of character education. Said in other way, we do not learn virtues in the abstract, or only by reading books or watching movie characters, but instead we learn them in many, many different contexts:

We learn in a multitude of embedded contexts, which can stand in various relations, from overlapping to conflicting: family, school, church, employment, siblings, friends, neighborhoods, and internet. *When we learn to be virtuous, then, the need to learn is less obvious than it is with skills, since our surroundings are overflowing with teachers, and often it is not obvious at the time that we are learning to be generous or brave in learning how to do things; most people discern this only much later.* Moreover, it is also not till much later that we are in a position to ask about our teachers' credentials as teachers of virtue, or to feel ourselves in a position to correct them. (p. 21-22 my emphasis).²⁴

Although Annas recognizes that there are many contexts of ethical education, she focuses on the context of children and parents because she says it seems to be the clearest case (p. 21). So she claims that at the beginning, due to the need to learn, children learn virtue by copying parents, their role model. But this is not mindless absorption. Since the drive to aspire moves children to try to understand, they ask their parents and themselves which are the essential elements that characterize virtuous actions.

Summarizing, Annas argues that like certain skills, virtue is mainly a matter of practice and practical reasoning. This conception has at least three salient features. First, it is a rational picture of the nature of virtue and the way we learn it. Second, it conceives teaching/learning virtue mostly as intelligent habituation or training

²⁴ With the special emphasis I want to call attention over the fact that Annas is saying here something similar to what I just said before about the Socratic and the Aristotelian position. That is, (i) that there are many different teachers of virtue who are not always noticed at the time they are teaching, and (ii) that such process of teaching/learning virtue is a lot of times unintentional and indirect.

(that is, acting and giving and receiving reasons). Nevertheless, according to her view this process seems to start blind or mindless (at least in the sense we just copy what models do without knowing why, without being able to give or receive reasons), and then it becomes articulated. Third, models play a fundamental role in this process by way of exemplifying the right way to act and give (and sometimes also to ask for) reasons for acting in that way.

I think Annas' picture of virtue is right but incomplete. The idea of how we become virtuous is constituent of our concept of virtue, and this is why it is worth thinking more about this issue. Because acting virtuously requires practical wisdom, the development of practical reasoning is fundamental to the cultivation of virtue. In this sense, learning to give and receive reasons for acting is part of intelligent habituation. But acting virtuously and being virtuous require more than knowing the relevant reasons to act and be in those ways. It requires also having the appropriate emotions. Moreover, some would say acting virtuously and being virtuous consist mostly in having the appropriate emotions, and in what follows we will consider a view in that direction.

3.2.2. Rosalind Hursthouse: learning virtue by educating our emotions

According to Hursthouse (2001), the Aristotelian approach to human rationality is superior to that of the Kantians because it conceives of emotions as rational, not merely as animal impulses that need to be controlled. As a consequence, in virtue theory emotions have cognitive value; they can be right or wrong. In her words, “In the person with the virtues, these emotions will be felt on the right occasions, towards the right people or objects, for the right reasons, where ‘right’ means ‘correct’, as in ‘The right answer to “What is the capital of New Zealand?” is “Wellington”’ (2001, p. 108). Emotions involve ideas, thoughts, perceptions or images of good and evil (taken in a general sense).

As a consequence, Hursthouse argues that education of our emotions is a big part of what is needed to attain virtue. She claims we can see this is true by examining racism as an example of miseducation. Racism arouses a large variety of negative feelings in a racist person. The racist feels fear of people of the other group, anger and contempt at their achievements, delight in their downfalls, hate, and suspicion, among other feelings. But it is unlikely that those feelings are natural. They need to be inculcated at a very early age, and their inculcation is subtle but long-lasting because it is done by

different kinds of representations, myths, archetypes, and metaphors. As a consequence, Hursthouse says, it is clear that “‘the’ way in which the training of the emotions shapes one's thoughts of generic good and evil cannot be divided neatly into the rational and the non-rational” (2001, p. 114).

These racist attitudes could be considered rational (in the descriptive, not the normative sense of the term), appropriate to rational animals insofar as they allow applications of words such as ‘good’ and ‘evil’ (it associates the word ‘good’ with representations of people of the same race or group as intelligent, brave, clean, sensible; and the word ‘evil’ with representations of people from other races or groups as dangerous, ignorant, perverted, dirty...). Moreover, that training sometimes includes sort of explanations or justifications for such associations (they are perverted and ignorant because they don’t think, feel or act as we do; they are dangerous because they cannot control themselves...).

Nevertheless, racism is also non-rational. First, because it comes from unconscious imitation. Children learn to respond emotionally in the way adults do. Secondly, that training is non-rational because the process described above as rational is infested with falsehoods. The application of the words, as well as the putative explanations or justifications, are misguided.

The result of such training, as we know, is hard to undo.

Hursthouse argues that reason can help, and also habitual acquaintance and intimacy with people different from us, but total re-training seems in certain sense impossible (p. 115). We can realize how weak our understanding of others is, how misleading our view of them is, but the result of early training of our emotions through imitation of emotional responses of others, images and representations transmitted by different means could be impossible to overcome. Nevertheless, while total re-training could seem impossible, those who were trained in such a way should fight against the views inculcated and try to cultivate the right emotions, not only because we do not know at which point such re-training stops being effective but also because we are accountable for what we feel and think about others. Moreover, we must seek harmony between reason and emotion as long it is possible for us because otherwise we will not be able to act virtuously.

...the whole idea that a human agent could do what she should, in every particular instance, while her emotions are way out of line, is a complete fantasy. Our understanding of what will hurt, offend, damage, undermine, distress or reassure, help, succor, support, or please our fellow human beings is at least as much emotional as it is theoretical. Dedicated adherence to rules or principles of charity and justice achieves a great deal, but it is only someone arrogant and self-righteous who supposes, given a conventional upbringing in which racism is embedded, that they can apply such rules and principles with the right imagination and sensitivity to other groups. (p. 118).

As we can see, the “giving and receiving reasons” which Annas considers fundamental to the cultivation of virtue is not enough for Hursthouse. Moreover, merely giving and receiving reasons sometimes could be even used to cover or justify bad attitudes and actions towards others (p.p. 118-119). In cultivation of virtue, Hursthouse argues, education of our emotions is the most fundamental issue.

A question remains for Hursthouse: how does this education of the emotions work? It seems it is the result of a combination of 1) images transmitted by every tradition through models like parents, teachers, neighbors, characters in books, stories, media, 2) the way that we learn language, and 3) the reasons we give and receive to act in a certain way (like in Annas’ approach).

Hursthouse argues that virtue ethics can give us an account of moral motivation “— that is, of acting from (a sense of) duty, on or from (moral) principle, because you think you (morally) ought to, or are (morally) required to, or because you think it's (morally) right—taking all these different phrases to be equivalent for present purposes” (p. 121).²⁵ Because of that, the third element above is very important for her viewpoint. She holds that the virtuous agent acts out of the right

²⁵ Against Elizabeth Anscombe’s (1958), Bernard Williams’ (1976), and Philippa Foot’s (2001) claims according to which ethics does not need those notions.

emotion, where “right” means that the emotion is shaped by reason, and the reason says it is reasonable (or “out of the sense of duty”) to do so and so. According to Hursthouse, to say that someone acts out of a sense of duty is to ascribe to her a settled state of good character, it is to say that she acts *from virtue*. This does not mean that she actually says or recognizes that something must be done because is right, “neither the avowals nor the concurrent sentences are sufficient for moral motivation” (p. 140).

What is both necessary and sufficient for moral motivation is to act from virtue. Like in Aristotle, in Hursthouse’s view the perfectly virtuous agent sets the standard for “moral motivation.” As a consequence, she conceives moral development as a matter of degree. According to her, although some children could do what is V (virtuous) for the X (right) reasons, we cannot ascribe to them the believing in such reasons since they are not the expression of the children’s own values. This seems to apply also to most young teenagers, and even some adults. But there is not a standard point at which this changes radically.

Acting from virtue includes having the right beliefs, and to ascribe beliefs to someone we require more than her mere utterance of them, we require from her an embedded way of acting. Because of that, Hursthouse remarks: “It may well be that teaching children a

good general answer to the question ‘Why is it right to do so-and-so?’ speeds up their moral development, but that is not to say that teaching them to produce the good answer gives them moral understanding on the spot” (p. 144). It could help, but it is not enough. Such moral understanding comes with moral motivation, which in her view is a combination of the right sensibility to grasp what is in play in the situation (the right emotion), and the right beliefs (V must be done because of X –“it is the right thing to do,” “because it is the duty”...).

It seems that in her view one element is not possible without the other. That is, there are not right emotions without the help of reasons (or right beliefs), and there are not right reasons or beliefs without the help of emotions. Nevertheless, she puts more emphasis in the need of the education of emotions, and remarks several times that reason could help in the re-formation of wrong emotions which are the result of bad trainings - like in the case of racism - but claims total re-formation is impossible. She is not explicit about whether re-formation the other way around is possible: the case of wrong beliefs changed or re-formed via emotions.

Summarizing, Hursthouse thinks emotions are (or can be) rational and are a constituent part of virtue; because of that the process of teaching and learning virtue goes beyond giving and receiving reasons. It involves a sort of training to see and feel others

and oneself in the right way, a training to have the appropriate emotions. Since we start by copying emotional responses from parents, teachers, and members of our community, in such training models play a fundamental role. With the learning of language comes also the learning of beliefs and reasons, which functions to justify the emotional responses already learnt. When this process is misguided, as in the case of racism, reason can help us to revise and correct our beliefs and emotions. But it must be clear that the re-formation of our emotions could take more time and effort, and we will not attain virtue as long as our emotional responses are not appropriate.

Although Hursthouse's picture of the cultivation of virtue as going beyond teaching and learning to give and receive reasons, and as including the appropriate training of our emotions is more complete, it still lacks a better explanation of the process as a whole. Some questions that come to mind are, for instance, how and why this process starts, and how is its revision possible? What is the role of others in it?

3.2.3. Linda Zagzebski: cultivating virtue through the emotion of admiration

Zagzebski's (2010) moral theory based on the emotion of admiration aims to provide a simple and comprehensive answer to

some questions of this nature. She claims emotions are reasons, and we pick out exemplars of moral goodness with our emotion of admiration. That is, by direct reference to exemplars we identify what a good person is (or should be), and that identification counts as a reason to act. She borrows the model of identification of exemplars from the direct reference theory developed by Hilary Putnam (1975) and Saul Kripke (1980) according to which some natural kind terms like “water”, “human”, and “gold” function in language even when the users of the language do not know the exact nature of them, just by way of pointing out to whatever instances of the things to which the terms refer. This explains why terms like “water” and “gold” were used satisfactorily even before the atomic structure of gold and water was discovered. People just identified them by saying something like “water is whatever is the same liquid as *this*, and gold is whatever is the same element as *that*.”

Likewise, in Zagzebski’s moral theory “good” - as well as other basic moral terms such as right act, good life, virtue, and good outcome- is defined²⁶ by reference to exemplars of moral goodness. It

²⁶ It is important to have in mind that her purpose is not to define concepts but rather to draw a map of our moral reality, “to construct a comprehensive ethical theory” (2016, Ch. 1). She does define moral concepts but her definitions have no conceptual content. Her definitions are giving by way of pointing out exemplars, they are like ostensive definitions.

is a non-conceptual foundational theory, based in an emotion that functions like a natural faculty which help us to pick out exemplars of goodness.²⁷

That the emotion of admiration is like a natural faculty does not mean, however, that the reference cannot be mistaken. There could be exemplars that we admire for what we think is their moral goodness but who are not really admirable. Zagzebski claims empirical investigation can help us to reveal the deep nature that makes someone a good person: her motivational structure. As in the case of the term “water”, in which scientists knew it was its deep nature which makes something water and empirical investigation revealed the exact molecular structure of it, in the case of the term “good person” we know it is the person’s deep nature what makes her good, and we need empirical studies to see how her motivational structure works. But since “the determination of what is deep and important is not itself empirical, there would be necessary *a posteriori* truths in ethics that can be discovered in a way that parallels the discovery of the nature of water” (p. 16).

²⁷ Notice that this idea of admiration as a human faculty that help us to identify exemplars of goodness seems to takes us back to the idea of human nature. Nevertheless, in conversation with Zagzebski she argued that although this may be the case, in her theory this second notion is not doing the same work that it is usually doing in traditional naturalistic virtue theories. Her theory is not grounded in the concept of human nature, nor in any other concept.

Regarding the process of acquiring and learning virtue, she argues that since exemplars are the most admirable and, because of that, imitable, “moral learning, like most other forms of learning, is principally done by imitation” (2013: 14). We want to be like the exemplars and that moves us to moral improvement. She claims the emotion of admiration is educated through the emotional reaction to the example of other people, and also through popular narratives present in every community.

In (2017) Zagzebski changes “imitation” to “emulation,” saying emulation is a form of imitation in which the person is seen as a model in some respect. Whereas imitation of some acts could be done without wanting to be like the model, because imitation is closer to copying, emulation seems to refer to a deeper motivation. They who emulate want to be like the model. Moreover, they want to emulate her because she is a model of goodness. In this sense, emulation is a thicker concept in Zagzebski’s theory since it has an evaluative element that expresses the moral goodness of the model:

Admiration explains why she would want to be like the person she emulates, not just for the pleasure of imitating, but because she sees the person she emulates as good. She emulates the admired person *qua* good, not just *qua* something it would be fun to imitate... Emulation arising from admiration can explain how virtuous motives develop. (p. 5).

But in order to be like the model or exemplar, those who emulate need to go further than just emulating an overt act. They need to have the appropriate motivations (emotions and reasons). Is it possible to do so by following an exemplar? Moreover, even if it is possible, would it be legitimate to call virtuous someone who acts as she does because she is emulating an exemplar?

Zagzebski thinks we can acquire the right emotions by way of emulating an exemplar. Since human beings have a natural inclination to imitate and our basic psychic structure is similar, we are mind-readers.²⁸ This allows us to picture or project our future selves in the image of the ideal self (exemplar) and emulate her emotions, which is called prospection.

On the other hand, the second question asks whether an act which is made not by purely generous motives but instead by the desire to emulate someone could genuinely be called generous. Zagzebski argues that an act motivated in that way is not generous, but it is legitimate to say that someone acts virtuously even though she is emulating an exemplar. That is so because the desire to be like

²⁸ This hypothesis is supported by the simulation theory, based on the discovery of the mirror neurons system. According to it, there are neurons that fire both when someone does something and when she sees someone else doing it, like in the case of dancing. In a way, those neurons “mirror” what other neurons do in the other’s brain. See Karen Shanton and Alvin Goldman (2010), Goldman (2008).

the model functions as a second order desire that guides the action, but the action itself needs not be motivated by that desire. Rather, it is motivated by the desire to acquire the exemplar's motive and act like her:

...one's admiration for an exemplar can be suspended while one inhabits the psychological state of the exemplar and feels whatever the exemplar feels. One's motive for acting in this way can then be the same as the motive of the exemplar, not admiration. (p. 11, note 10).

So it seems that according to Zagzebski we can train our emotions by emulating an exemplar. But if acting virtuously requires having the right reasons, can we acquire those reasons in the same way? First, it is important to notice here that in the debate about the role that emotions and reasons play in moral behavior, Zagzebski claims emotions *are* reasons (p. 17). As such, they can be mistaken - irrational. Emotions like admiration or disgust are right, reasonable, when we reflect upon them, evaluate their coherence with some other relevant beliefs we have, compare them with emotions other people we trust have, and see they survive this conscientious reflection. Because those are trustworthy emotions, they constitute good reasons to act.

Nevertheless, Zagzebski also recognizes the importance of beliefs as reasons to act. Can we acquire the exemplar's beliefs by emulating her? Although Zagzebski argues we cannot come to believe

something just picturing ourselves as having the beliefs of the exemplars (as it works in the case of emotions), my admiration by *X* could include epistemic admiration, which is admiration for the way *X* forms her beliefs, and this could be a second order reason to believe that what she believes is true (2012). In this case, if *X* believes *p*, my admiration for *X* counts as evidence in favor of the truth of *p*.

Furthermore, if it is true that acting virtuously requires not only the right reasons (emotions and beliefs), but also understanding of the way those reasons justify actions (Zagzebski is not sure whether this is the case, p. 25), can we get that from the exemplar? Her answer is “no,” because moral reasoning works like any other reasoning: someone can show us the connections but we will see them only if we have already trained our natural ability to see them. This does not mean, however, that exemplars cannot help us to improve our moral reasoning. As in the case of specific beliefs, our admiration for someone can suggest us a line of thought that we had not considered before but now seems more plausible due to the fact that the exemplar holds it. Nevertheless, we do not acquire the ability to see the connection among beliefs and among motives and acts by emulating an exemplar. With other’s help we develop it by ourselves.

Summarizing, like most virtue theorists Zagzebski holds a cognitive conception of emotions, according to which emotions are

reasons. In her theory, the emotion of admiration is the main motor of virtue cultivation. It is like a natural faculty that in general allows us to pick up exemplars of moral goodness, and moves us to want to be like them. Admiration conduces to emulation. In this sense, the process of teaching/learning virtue is prompted by the admiration of exemplars (real and fictitious). Emotions, beliefs, and comprehension could be attained through them, although not always by emulation. By trying to emulate an exemplar I could enact the emotion for compassion or courage, but I cannot acquire the exemplar's beliefs about compassion or courage in the same way. Nevertheless, my admiration of her could include epistemic admiration and count as evidence in favor of the truth of those beliefs. In the same way, this admiration could help me gain understanding of different moral situations.

I would like to stress Zagzebski's idea that emotions are reasons. Thus understood, Annas' idea of learning virtue as a process of intelligent habituation in which we learn to act in a certain way and also to give and receive reasons for acting in such a way gains a richer meaning. Those reasons can be thought as either beliefs or emotions, and this means emotions need also be educated. Although this is Hursthouse' thesis, her approach is not clear enough about how such education is possible, perhaps because she treats this issue in a negative way by showing why racism is an example of miseducation.

Moreover, when she talks of moral motivation as including also the right reasons or beliefs, she does not say much about how to develop either of them. Zagzebski's theory offers a good suggestion of how moral education could go. Although it does not talk of how the process starts, her theory of moral development as motivated by the emotion of admiration provides a positive view of how cases of miseducation like those mentioned by Hursthouse could be treated. So while Hursthouse's approach only gives us some hints of how reason can partially help us to re-form our emotions in the right way (note that in her view emotions are not reasons, but *could* be reasonable), Zagzebski shows us how the identification of an exemplar motivates our moral improvement by giving us reasons – in the form of right emotions, beliefs, and maybe understanding - to act and become like the exemplar. Like Hursthouse, Zagzebski claims that in the cultivation of virtue, emotions play the most important role. But Zagzebski goes further, since she identifies an emotion that moves us to moral improvement, the emotion of admiration.

Zagzebski argues that good moral theories should work as maps. They should simplify and systematize the moral scenario, giving us understanding of moral phenomena and giving us the possibility to revise our practices and change them if needed. I think she succeeds in giving us a good map of how part of our moral life

could work. Moreover, since her theory is based not in a concept but rather in an emotion (which makes the theory structurally foundational) it succeeds also in providing a practical bridge between theory and practice. Nevertheless, she says:

At some point in our moral development, we will do less emulating and more self-reflective management. The process is the same as that used by exemplars. In fact, it is the same process used by any self. Exemplars are just persons who do an especially good job of directing the self. Emulation of an exemplar does not exhaust the creation of a moral self, and emulation is not sufficient to become morally virtuous in the highest degree. But it is a good thing if we never lose track of who the exemplars are (p. 27).

Although a good moral theory aims at simplifying, we must be careful to see which important elements are left behind. I think our moral life is so rich and full of different experiences, relationships and people that the emotion of admiration and the subsequent desire to emulate the exemplar defined by Zagzebski is not enough to explain the process of virtue cultivation. And I am not convinced that what is missing in the picture is just self-reflective management. My aim here is to add at least one more element to the map, constituted by what happens when we are engaged in close relationships with moral non-superiors – most especially, with friends.

Chapter II. Friendship

*“When two go together,
they are more capable
of understanding and acting.”*
Aristotle (NE, 8, 1).

“The smallest indivisible human unit is two people, not one; one is a fiction”
(Tony Kushner, 1993: 307). Cited by Carmichael (2007:285).

“You can’t be a self by yourself”
(Hazel Markus, 2005). Cited by Carmichael (2007:285).

“The attribute we call individuality is constructed in relation”.
(Noddings, 2008).

1. About the nature of friendship

The account of friendship I will try to develop is mainly inspired by Aristotle’s, but is not intended to be strictly Aristotelian. That is, I am not trying to develop a rigorous interpretation of his texts but rather to use them to support what I think is a good notion of friendship.

Aristotle starts Book VIII of the Nicomachean Ethics (NE) claiming friendship is a virtue or involves virtue. I will take it as involving virtue, for several reasons. First, he does not talk of it as a virtue at any other place. Second, Aristotle’s characterization of virtues usually defines them as excellences of character, but friendship is not an excellence

of character, at least in the sense that it is not “seated” in one person. Although there is a form of friendship – the most complete, according to him - that requires good character, friendship is not something that I cultivate in *my* character. Third, Aristotle makes a distinction between friendship (*philia*) and friendliness (*philein*), the second more properly fitting the characteristics of a virtue. He claims friendliness is a social virtue (1126b11-1127a13), it is “...just what we mean in speaking of a decent friend, except that the friend is also fond of us” (1126b22). The person who exhibits friendliness is “...concerned with the pleasures and pains that arise in meeting people” (1126b30).²⁹ As a consequence of these reasons, in what follows I take friendship more as involving virtue than as a virtue.

1. 1. The scope

Friendship is a relationship characterized by mutual well-wishing, affection, and mutual acknowledgment of this mutual well-wishing and affection (Aristotle, *NE* 1155b32–35). That is, in every aspect of the relationship, a friend wishes good for the other, for the

²⁹ For more on this distinction, see White, 1990. See also M. Pakaluk (1991), where he claims that whereas Aristotle’s treatment of friendship in the *NE* is about close and affectionate relationships, his treatment of it in the *Rhetoric* is more about how public speakers should talk to the audience. In this sense, he argues, *philia* would appropriately be rendered as ‘love’ in the first case, and *philein* as ‘friendliness’ in the second (p. 72).

other's sake, and the friend knows about these good wishes.³⁰

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). This does not mean, however, that friends who are in complete friendship cannot provide pleasure or usefulness for each other, but rather that these are not the primary grounds of the relationship. In fact, pleasure or enjoyment of each other's company seems to be an important feature of complete friendship.³¹

The Greek word *philia*, usually translated in English as *friendship*, is also translated as "brotherly love." So despite the fact that in the ancient world "friendship" used to include connotations of family ties, many treatments of the subject restrict the word to

³⁰ There seems to be general agreement about this feature. Most of the scholars claim a key feature of friendship is that friends wish for the other's well-being (Cooper, 1980; M. Nussbaum, 1986). Nevertheless, T. Irwin (1999) argues that "the inferior forms of friendship are not fully friendships, since they lack the essential element of goodwill" (his notes on the NE, notes to Book VIII, Chapter 4, paragraph 1).

³¹ Badhwar (1993) calls the third kind of friendship 'end virtue', but her characterization of it goes in the same direction: "End friendships usually are useful in many ways, and friends must at least aim to be useful in certain ways if they are to be real friends. They remain end friendships, however, because what is central to them is the happiness that is intrinsic to the love, and not the happiness that results from the satisfaction of one's goals" (p. 14). Kant also talked of three kinds of friendship, based on need, taste, and disposition or sentiment ("Lecture on Friendship", in Pakaluk 1991: 212-215). Like in Aristotle, only the third kind is real friendship, mostly characterized in Kant by disclosure. He says we achieve complete communion in this Ideal friendship.

relationships outside the family realm.³² My conception of friendship admits the possibility of real friendship among members of a family, and contrary to what many traditional philosophers held, my account presupposes women can be friends with other women as well as with

³² They do so usually to place more emphasis on what is considered a fundamental feature of this close relationship: that we choose our friends. We will discuss this issue later in Chapter IV.

men,³³ and that good marriages are a form of real friendships.³⁴

Moreover, I will argue in favor of the thesis that children can be real

³³ For opposite views, see Schopenhauer (1851), where he claims “The fundamental defect of the female character is a lack of a sense of justice. This originates first and foremost in their want of rationality and capacity for reflection but it is strengthened by the fact that, as the weaker sex, they are driven to rely not on force but on cunning: hence their instinctive subtlety and their ineradicable tendency to tell lies: for, as nature has equipped the lion with claws and teeth, the elephant with tusks, the wild boar with fangs, the bull with horns and the cuttlefish with ink, so it has equipped woman with the power of dissimulation as her means of attack and defense, and has transformed into this gift all the strength it has bestowed on man in the form of physical strength and the power of reasoning. Dissimulation is thus inborn in her and consequently to be found in the stupid woman almost as often as in the clever one. To make use of it at every opportunity is as natural to her as it is for an animal to employ its means of defense whenever it is attacked, and when she does so she feels that to some extent she is only exercising her rights. A completely truthful woman who does not practice dissimulation is perhaps an impossibility, which is why women see through the dissimulation of others so easily it is inadvisable to attempt it with them. – But this fundamental defect which I have said they possess, together with all that is associated with it, gives rise to falsity, unfaithfulness, treachery, ingratitude, etc. Women are guilty of perjury far more often than men. It is questionable whether they ought to be allowed to take an oath at all.” It is clear that a person with these characteristics is incapable of engaging in friendship, since friendship requires trust, respect, honesty, and love for the other.

Aristotle claims friendship is possible among men and women when he talks about friendship between unequals (1158b11-19). Nevertheless, it seems he would not conceive possible *character* friendship between them. About this, M. Nussbaum argues: “His [Aristotle’s] investigation of the potential of women for excellence is notoriously crude and hasty. He is able to bypass the problem of developing their capabilities and he is able to deny them a share in the highest *philia*, as a result of bare assertions about their incapability for full adult moral choice that show no sign of either sensitivity or close attention. Had he devoted to the psychology of women, or even to their physiology (about which he makes many ludicrous and easily corrigible errors) even a fraction of the sustained care that he devoted to the lives and bodies of shellfish, the method [of appearances] would have been better served.” (1986: 371).

³⁴ See, for instance, Thomas Aquinas (1269-72), who claimed marriage is the greatest degree of friendship. Mary L. Shanley (1993) argues J. S. Mill holds this position in *The Subjection of Woman* (1869), where he argued in favor of equality between male and female as a pre-condition for marital friendship, and held that

friends, both with other children and with adults, and that this possibility constitutes a rich ground for the cultivation of virtues that remains mostly unexplored within virtue theory despite considerable support from psychology (I will expand on this in Chapter IV). Nevertheless, since my focus rests on a qualified form of friendship that requires time and effort by those who are involved, I do not take it to be a sort of natural relationship but rather as a chosen one. So even though I grant that members of the same family could be friends, they can only attain the complete form of friendship because they want it, not just as a matter of their natural bond.

On the other hand, in ancient Greece *philia* could also be used to refer to the affection one could feel for a business partner, an acquaintance, or even for fellow citizens. Although it seems Aristotle was aware of this use of the term, it is clear that when he talks of virtue or complete friendship he is referring to the closer and more intimate relationship we are engaged in a one-to-one relationship with someone we value. I am also subscribing to this second and narrow sense of the term for my thesis.

women are as capable as men of the highest form of friendship. See also B. Fowers (2000), who sees the cultivation of character friendship between couples as a key to have good marriages.

1. 2. Some of the main features of friendship

One of the most salient features of friendship is that it is constitutive of human flourishing.³⁵ Since human beings are social, they need others to live well and this explain why families, communities, and *poloi* (cities, states) are needed for human development. But why is friendship also needed? The fact that Aristotle acknowledged this need expresses a substantial difference between his and Plato's moral and political philosophy.³⁶ 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,

³⁵ It seems plausible to say that there are some forms of flourishing human lives without friendship, at least in the form that I am describing here. Some religious forms of life, that of Buddhist monks, for instance, qualify as flourishing without the cultivation of friendships in the Aristotelian terms. They, nevertheless, value and cultivate what they call "noble friendships" (See: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca4/samma-ditthi/kalyanamittata.html> and http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html). Such notion of noble friendship shares many core ideas with that of character friendship, but differs in many others, the main being the value given to attachment that seems fundamental for Aristotle and virtue theory – attachment is (unsurprisingly) less valued in the Buddhist view. Nevertheless, since cases like those of the monks are special, I think I can make the weaker claim that friendship plays a fundamental role in *regular* human flourishing.

³⁶ See N. Sherman (1987) and M. Nussbaum (1986) on this. According to Nussbaum, one of the biggest differences between Plato and Aristotle is that whereas Plato thinks that in order to build the Republic affective family ties must be cut, Aristotle thinks they are fundamental to sustain the *Polis*. Affective ties are fundamental within the Aristotelian view, according to Nussbaum, because they motivate "...at least three mechanisms of mutual influence... [i] that of advice and correction [...ii] that of leveling or assimilating influence of shared activity [...and iii] emulation and imitation" (p. 362-363).

Aristotle recognizes that virtue by itself is not enough for leading a happy human life (NE I.8). There are some external conditions needed too, such as health, money, good birth, power, and most of all, friends. He even claims that we would not want to have any of the other external goods if we do not have friends. Aristotle calls friends the “greatest” and “most necessary” of external goods (NE 1169b10, 1154a4), without whom we would not choose to live “even if we had all other goods” (1155a5–6, cf. 1169b16–17).³⁷ Why? I think that in Aristotle’s theory character friendship³⁸ plays a fundamental role in the development of the kind of theoretical and practical reason that make a flourishing human life possible, 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 share activities, conversation, and thought (1170b5-15, 1171b30-1172a15).³⁹ Part of my thesis is that such

³⁷ Others on the idea that for Aristotle friends are external goods are J. M. Cooper (1985), M. Nussbaum (1986), and N. Sherman (1989).

³⁸ I follow Cooper’s (1980) suggestion of changing the expression *virtue friendship* for that of *character friendship*, because 1). Aristotle himself suggests the term at NE 1164a12, 1165b8–9, EE 1241a10, 1242b36, and 2). It allows us to say that the best form of friendship is possible even among non-fully virtuous agents, which seems to be also something held by Aristotle.

³⁹ See Kristjánsson (2014) and Brewer (2005) in which they support this thesis about the importance of dialogue with friends to achieve episteme. I think a similar view to the one I am suggesting here is held by McIntyre (1999).

sharing has an epistemic and a motivational value that contributes in a substantial way to the cultivation of the virtues.

As a consequence of this prominent role of friendship in human flourishing, it is both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. That is, friendship contributes to and constitutes part of human happiness understood as human flourishing. It is an instrument in the sense that friends help us to do and achieve things that we would not be able to do and achieve by ourselves; friends support us by helping us to provide the means to our ends. They are refuge in misfortunes, beneficiaries of our prosperity, and co-partners in doing fine actions (1155a5-15).⁴⁰ Friendship is intrinsically valuable, on the other hand, because friends love each other for themselves, as well as their relationship.⁴¹ In the case of character friendship, the relationship itself is a good and facilitates a good to those involved, which is the possibility to cultivate together their well-being.⁴² In Sherman's words:

The intrinsic worth of friendship, in contrast, is of a much more pervasive sort, providing the very form and mode of life within which an agent can best realize her virtue and achieve happiness. To have

⁴⁰ See M. Nussbaum (1986), who claims that friendship (or love, in her terms), plays a central instrumental role in the development of good character and appropriate aspiration.

⁴¹ The point here is that even if we subscribe Aristotle's threefold classification of friendship (based on utility, pleasure, or virtue) this is a necessary requisite for any relationship that could be called friendship. Otherwise it would be an exploitive relationship. See Nussbaum (1986: 355), and Cooper (1980) on the idea that all three types of Aristotelian friendship entail mutual well-wishing.

⁴² It seems to me this would count as a *practice* in McIntyre's (1991) terms. I will expand more this idea of character friendship as *praxis* in Chapter III, section 2.4.

intimate friends and good children is to have interwoven in one's life, in a ubiquitous way, persons towards whom and with whom one can most fully and continuously express one's goodness. The friendships [...] are the form virtuous activity takes when it is especially fine and praise-worthy (1155a9, 1159a28–31). (Sherman, 1989: 127).

The intrinsic value of friendship implies an interesting, and yet for many strange, view of self-sufficiency. At the beginning of his NE, when Aristotle talks of a happy life, he says it is self-sufficient and complete in the sense that it does not lack anything (1097b1-22). This idea and what he says on book X of the same work - according to which the highest happiness consists in theoretical contemplation - have led some scholars to think that the Aristotelian *telos* is the solitary contemplative life.⁴³ Nevertheless, Aristotle's idea of a happy self-sufficient *human* life⁴⁴ is a life that involves others and their happiness.⁴⁵ Because a happy and a self-sufficient human life is a life that doesn't lack anything, and one of the most important parts of it is

⁴³ This position has been called Strict Intellectualism, firstly formulated by David Keyt (1978). Cooper (1975) holds this position because he claims that in Book X Aristotle identifies a person with his theoretical *nous* or rational part of the soul.

⁴⁴ I put emphasis in the word "human" because following T. Irwin's (1999) interpretation, I think Aristotle is contrasting the highest happiness *by itself*, possible only for gods, with the highest happiness *for human beings*. A happy human life could (and should, but not necessarily so) include theoretical contemplation, but cannot be by any means a solitary life (See Irwin's 1999 notes to Book VIII, paragraph 6, p. 280). In such a life the exercise of most of the virtues would be impossible. There are many other scholars who hold this inclusivist position. See, for instance, T. Irwin (1999: 181-183), Whiting (1986) and Heinaman (1988).

⁴⁵ See T. Irwin (1999), Sherman (1987), and Nussbaum (1986).

the kind of fine activity that friendship implies, a happy human life requires friends (1169b3-1170b19). A happy self-sufficient human life involves others, because "...having friends is a part of my happiness" (Irwin, 1999: 299).

I think an important pre-condition of this conception of self-sufficiency is a social notion of the self. Contrary to some modern conceptions of it, the Aristotelian self is social by nature.⁴⁶ The Aristotelian self is not defined merely in terms of rationality (such as the Kantian self (1791)) or independence (such as the Sartrean self (1956)), for instance. The way in which emotions and reasons are interwoven, as well as the way in which someone relates to others and to her own context define the Aristotelian self.

With Nussbaum (1986), I would say this makes vulnerability an important characteristic of Aristotle's conception of the good life and the self. Since some human goods are relational goods in Aristotelian terms, his conception of human happiness and his conception of the self are vulnerable to many things in a way that they are not for Plato and Kant. A self which is defined in part by its relation with others

⁴⁶ See K. Kristjánsson (2007): "Aristotle's view of the development of moral selfhood is essentially a non-autonomous one" (p. 108); N. Sherman (1991), and N. K. Badhwar (1993) who argues that although this way of characterizing friendship pictures it as originating in what some view as a metaphysical deficiency, it is rather the acknowledgment of friendship's moral importance for who we are: humans, not gods (p. 18). For a feminist critique of the modern conception of the self, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-self/#BM1>.

must count on luck, for instance, to find a loved one to value, must be able to trust the other, must remain relatively constant despite the changes that come with age and bad fortune, and so on. This is a self that is social and embodied and, because of that, vulnerable⁴⁷.

2. What is a good friend?⁴⁸

It is important to notice here that the thesis according to which friendship plays a fundamental role in the moral development of human beings, and especially in the cultivation of virtues, is both descriptive and prescriptive. It says something about human nature and how it is structured, but it also prescribes in the sense that it is not about human life and friendship in general but about *good* human lives and *good* friendships. It claims that a good human life is a life with good friends, among other things. As a consequence, we need to know something about what a good friend is.

We said earlier that friendship (not yet *good* friendship) is a relationship characterized by mutual well-wishing, mutual affection and appreciation, and mutual acknowledgment of this. With Cooper, I think friendship (again, not yet *good* friendship) also implies that such

⁴⁷ I will go back to the importance of the notion of “self” within a comprehensive theory of virtue cultivation in Chapter IV, section 1.

⁴⁸ This is different from the question “What does good friendship require?” A good treatment of it could be found in Walker et Al. (2015).

well-wishing is for the friend's sake.⁴⁹ Next I will explore two different but not mutually exclusive ways of defining a good friend.

2. 1. *A good friend has a good character*

According to this approach, a good friend is one we love for what she is, for her good qualities.⁵⁰ This is what Cooper calls "character friendship" instead of "virtuous friendship," because he says complete friendship is possible also between people who are not fully virtuous (Cooper, 1980: 308). What characterizes this friendship, then,

⁴⁹ Cooper (1980) argues that any form of friendship must have this characteristic in order to be properly called friendship. That is, even in what Aristotle calls pleasure or advantage friendship there is mutual well-wishing for the other's sake. In Cooper's words "...If, as I suggested above, Aristotle means to adopt in *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.2 the *Rhetoric's* definition of friendship as always involving well-wishing to one's friend for his own sake, then the three types will have much in common: in every friendship, of whichever of the three types, the friend will wish his friend whatever is good, for his own sake, and it will be mutually known to them that this well-wishing is reciprocated." (Cooper, 1980: 309). According to Cooper, in the Aristotelian view one could love a friend instrumentally (because she is pleasant or useful) and yet wish her good for her own sake. It is so, Cooper argues, since the "because" here does not mean that one wishes the friend's good in order to keep having pleasure or advantages from her (the "because" is not prospective). Rather, one wishes good to such a friend as a sort of recognition of her properties that initially made possible the relationship, be they useful or pleasant properties (the "because" here is retrospective) (Cooper, 1980: 311). Nussbaum endorses this view point too (see Nussbaum, 1986: 355, note).

⁵⁰ Assuming that the character defines what someone is. There is some dispute about this. See, for instance, Nussbaum (1986, Ch. 12, foot note 33): "It is not clear whether Aristotle really wants to accord to character the status of an essential property; his discussions of character—he certainly permits some change without a change of identity, and he never discusses sudden and sweeping changes. Elsewhere he certainly insists that the only essential characteristics are those that a being shares with all other members of its kind." (p. 488).

is that it is based on the good qualities of both parties (where these good qualities are not necessarily identical with virtues). According to Cooper, since “on Aristotle’s theory of moral virtue the virtues are essential properties of human *kind*...” (p. 312) people whose relationship is based on those properties are friends without qualification. On the contrary, people whose relationship is based on pleasure and advantage are incidental friends.

Although in general this seems to be the most accepted conception on the Aristotelian view of what characterizes a good or complete friendship, there are some nuances that we must bear in mind. The first has to do with the distinction between essential and accidental properties, and the second has to do with the idea of stability that those positive qualities give to the relationship.

Firstly, the emphasis on the fact that the good moral properties of my friend are what lead me to be her friend seems to entail a certain instrumentalization of her. If what I love from her are just those properties in abstract, the objection goes, then I could change my friend whenever I find someone with the same properties. She seems to be a means to my contact with such good qualities, and because of

that she is fungible or disposable whenever I find other equal or better means to attain the same.⁵¹

This is one of many differences between Plato's and Aristotle's conception of *philia*.⁵² In the Platonic view you love the good qualities of the person, not the person herself.⁵³ But there must be something mistaken here. If you are a real friend of mine, I will not want to (or be able to) exchange you, because *you* are who I love and appreciate, not just your good qualities. As Badhwar claims, in "end love" (or friendship) "The object of my love must be you, the person, in your concrete individuality, not "Human Being" or "Instance of (some) F" (1987:7).

It appears that part of the problem lays in the way we conceive those qualities. First, they could be seen as essential in the sense that they share with an idealized Good, as they are conceived in Plato's theory. Under this view, the person's good qualities are instantiations of the Form of the Good, which is permanent, whereas the person and what she does or what happens to her is accidental, temporal, and because of that not worthy of high consideration. On the other hand,

⁵¹ See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friendship/#1.1> for more on this objection.

⁵² Nussbaum (1986) speculates that this has to do with their different sexual orientation, which influenced the way they thought about family, close relationships and the role of these in the public arena (p. 369-371).

⁵³ For a good characterization of Plato's view on this, see M. Nussbaum (1979).

we could think those qualities as inseparable from the person and her history, as Badhwar (1987) suggests:

On the conception I am defending, a person's essential qualities are inseparable from his numerical or historical identity, both in fact and as object of cognition and love... (p. 20)
...An individual's history, as such, is no more accidental than his qualities: the essential-accidental distinction is a distinction within the individual's historical-qualitative identity. Thus 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).

Under this viewpoint, a friendship grounded in the good qualities of the friends needs not be conceived as instrumental, as long as those good properties are seen as unique for being part of what the person is, her history, and the way they are expressed in her in a unique fashion.⁵⁴

Second, we must consider the stability of those qualities and how their change could affect the relationship. Although those good qualities are stable enough to be considered part of what a person is, they are not something rigidly settled as carved in stone. People

⁵⁴ Nussbaum (1986) also embraces this point: "The best *philia* does seek traits of character in the object. But this search is different in several ways from the search enjoined by *Diotima*. First, he or she seeks out many traits that could have no part in a divine or perfect life... Second, he seeks and attends to those repeatable traits differently: not as pieces of something homogeneous that turns up in many places in the universe, but as forming the essential core of what that concrete person is. He attends to virtues and aspirations because those are the deepest that go to make another individual the individual he is. He searches not for isolatable bits of a form, but for the combination of traits and aspirations that make the wholeness of a person's character..." (p. 357).

change over time for different circumstances and those qualities change too. Despite the first consideration regarding the fungibility problem, those changes could affect the friendship. It is not clear enough how Cooper understands his expression “friends without qualification” as opposed to “incidental friends” mentioned earlier, but a proper understanding of good qualities of a person’s character must consider the possibility of their change. With Badhwar (1987), I think that even complete or character friendship is conditional: it depends on the fact that the friend’s changes do not affect her *self* in a substantial and negative way (p. 6, 11). Aristotle also considers this possibility (NE 1165b14-22), and his answer is in the same vein. Needless to say, this malleability of characters constitutes an important part of the value of good friendship, which has to do with the possibility of growth, in the sharing that the relationship facilitates.

Finally, it is important to highlight another element of this way of defining a good friend as a character friend. The final form of friendship in the Aristotelian theory, which Aristotle calls “complete friendship,” is preceded by virtue. It is the relationship formed by two virtuous agents, and that is why it is also called “virtue friendship” (1156b7-19). But as was mentioned before (section 2.1), some suggest to interpret Aristotle as recognizing the possibility of virtue friendship between less than fully virtuous agents, and between non-

equals (Cooper, 1980 and K. Kristjánsson, 2007). I think virtue friendship is preceded by some similarities, but in certain sense also nurtured by differences. So, if it is not the “level”, or “completeness” of virtue that binds good friends together, what is it?

It is both their good characters (even if they are developed unequally) and their shared conception of the good, their shared values and ends. An initial and general shared view in these fundamental issues makes possible the relationship, the sharing of activities and pleasures, and then the construction of a history that over time ends up “shaping” one another.⁵⁵ Since I think this is in part what facilitates the cultivation of virtue within friendship, I will say more about this idea later (Chapter III, section 2.1). By now, this connects us with another important definition of good friends based on their similarities.

2. 2. A friend is a mirror, another self

It seems this idea catches what is a common experience: we tend to associate and share our time with people who are similar to us, and in this sense our friends reflect in some way something about

⁵⁵ On this idea of friends shaping each other, see Nussbaum (1986: 357); Badhwar (1993: 23-24); and Sherman (1989: 134).

ourselves, something about what we like and value⁵⁶. In this way, we can say friends identify with each other. Aristotle writes: “Equality and similarity, and above all the similarity of those who are similar in being virtuous, is friendship” (EN 1159b3–5; see also 1156b7–22). And we should interpret him here as referring to *real* or *complete* friendship. The first claim is descriptive, because expresses something we tend to do, but the Aristotelian claim is also prescriptive, since it stipulates that complete friendship must be based in similarity,⁵⁷ but not just any similarity. Complete or good friendships must be grounded in similarity of the friends’ concern for what is valuable.

On the other hand, Aristotle also thinks of a friend as another self (EN 1161b28, 1166a30-33, 1166bl, 1169b5-7, 1170a2–4, b6–8, 1170b6f, 1171a20, and 1171b33). According to him, friendship and the love we feel toward a friend springs from self-love. That is, he claims that one needs to be first a good friend to oneself in order to be a good friend of another, and also that the way I feel and behave toward myself will be the way I will feel and behave toward my friend.

⁵⁶ For a criticism of this view, see Cocking and Kennett (1998) who claim the notion of a friend as a mirror assigns a passive function to the friend. Instead, they say friends are like artists who shape each other.

⁵⁷ Bernard Williams (1976) disagree with this idea. He thinks friends must be different in character, and that it is a mistake to say a man’s friend is a duplication of himself (p. 212). As a consequence, he says, Aristotle does not have a good answer to the question of why it is important to commit and get involved with a particular person (212).

So he finds that the marks of true friendship are present in the relationship that a person has to himself (EN 1166a1-10): he wishes goods for his own sake, he enjoys the time he spends with himself, and so on: "...an extreme degree of friendship resembles one's friendship to oneself" (1166b37). This is the reason why vicious people have no true friends (1166b3-28).

That we think of our friends as other selves seems psychologically plausible not only because we feel that they are an important part of who and what we are, but also because, as Sherman claims, "we experience a friend's happiness or sorrow as our own" (Sherman (1989: 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 a social conception of the self, mentioned earlier, in the sense that it includes others and especially friends.⁵⁸ We will come back to this notion of a friend as another self in section 3.1.

Nevertheless, we must be careful with this idea too. 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 her own

⁵⁸ See my discussion of self-sufficiency in Aristotelian terms (Ch. 1, 1.2).

sake” would not make any sense.⁵⁹ If I am hoping for my friend’s good but I think that my friend is the same as me, I am just hoping for my own good. In other words, the object of friendship’s love must be my friend as a *self* independent from myself. Sherman (1991) explains it in this way:

While a Kantian notion of autonomy is clearly alien to Aristotle, I want to suggest, none the less, that the relationship between virtue friends exhibits some mindfulness both of the differences between friends and of their separateness. This entails that such friends promote each other's good in a privileged way (as only another self can), but in a way that is still respectful of the mature rational agency of each... In this regard, there may be some significance in Aristotle's choice of words at EE 1245a35, where he says that a friend is 'a separate self' (*autos diairetos*). (p. 139).

I think this notion of a friend as a separate self encompasses an emotional and a cognitive component. It captures the emotional engagement between friends, and at the same time it points out to the necessary requirement of considering the friend as a fully rational being. It is what Badhwar (1987:7) wants to remark when she talks of character friends as end friends. I love my friend as I love my self, and I wish her well-being and help her pursue it as if it were mine (here we should think more in terms of the force with which we will pursue it than in terms of the content), but I recognize and respect her as a rational being that could (and may) look for her ends in different ways

⁵⁹ For more on this, see Nussbaum (1986: 355).

than mine. Or that could even have some particular ends different than mine. This, nevertheless, should not lead us to think our pursuit of well-being and our friend's pursuit of hers is a subjective matter. As Brewer (2009) argues, the Aristotelian notion of the self is *eudaimonic*:

Aristotle regarded the core of the self as *nous*: there is a sense in which the self becomes fully itself—that is, comes to be a genuinely unified self—only insofar as its capacity for rationality comes to answer to its own constitutive ideal by devoting itself to what is fine in itself rather than conforming its verdicts to purely subjective and unreasoned desires or pleasures. (Brewer, 2009: 277)⁶⁰.

Despite the differences and the necessary independence of character friends, nonetheless, they are similar enough to be a privileged source of self-knowledge. Their sharing give them the

⁶⁰ T. Irwin (1990) shares the same view on what it means to love a friend as another self: "In so far as I treat my friend as I treat myself, my reasoning and thinking are related to his reasoning, thinking, and action in the same way as they are related to mine [...] Aristotle claims that this mutual attitude of friends involves concord and goodwill. Concord requires friends to share the same views on important questions about benefit and harm (1167b4–9). Since the good person is in concord with himself, and he regards his friend as another self, he will also be in concord with his friend. Concord does not imply that two virtuous friends will immediately give the same answer when asked, or that each will automatically defer to the other; for this is not the good person's attitude to himself either. Concord implies an extra participant in rational deliberation, and hence further considerations to take into account; it does not involve conflict or compromise between competing interests. Goodwill explains why there is no competition in a friendship between virtuous people. The virtuous person is concerned with the friend's good for the friend's own sake; if Al is Ann's friend, he wishes good to Ann for Ann's own sake, not just as a means to his own good (1167a10–14; cf. 1155b31–4). Al cares about himself for his own sake, not merely as a means to anyone else's interest; and so he sees that the same treatment of Ann will involve caring about her for her own sake, since she is another rational agent who counts for Al in the way Al counts for himself" (p.p. 392-3).

opportunity to better exercise self-awareness and self-examination that may not be easy to find in any other experience.⁶¹ The trust provided by a good friendship facilitates self-disclosure, and the constant sharing between the friends functions as a sort of testing arena for what is revealed by each other, either by oral testimony or behavior.⁶² You could consider yourself open-minded and say to others that you are so, for instance, but your good friend might know better if you actually exhibit that virtue.

I think one of the most important elements of this way of thinking about a good friend is that it reveals a deep acknowledgment of our difficulty to know ourselves. Our own knowledge of ourselves escapes from us, and we need someone close enough to watch what we say and do, to challenge our conceptions of ourselves, of others and the world. We need someone similar enough to understand us, but different enough to know our limits and to facilitate our growth. Finally, we also need someone who can do this with love and respect,

⁶¹ See Badhwar (1993: 8), and Branden (1993: 65). I will expand more this idea in Chapter III, section 2.2.

⁶² An interesting objection to this way of defining complete friends is presented by Cocking D. and J. Kennett (1998). There, they say the notion of a friend as a mirror assigns her a passive role in the relationship. By contrast, they say friendship is as characterized by similarities as it is by differences between friends, and what is at the core of their relationship is a sort of drawing of the self of each other. Friends interpret and direct each other, and more than a mirror, they are like painters.

and we need to know that this person loves us and respects us. I will say more about this later (Chapter III 2.1).

To sum up, the definition of complete friendship (CE) would be as follows. If A and B are complete friends, then:

CF: (1) A appreciates B, and B appreciates A, (2) A wishes for B's well-being for B's own sake, and B wishes A's well-being for A's own sake, (3) A and B are both motivated to act in a way that promotes the other's well-being for the other's sake, (4) both A and B know of their good mutual disposition to each other, (5) their relationship is based on good qualities of their characters (6) A and B think of each other as another (but independent) self, and (7) A and B share distress, enjoyment, as well as similar core values and projects.⁶³

It seems that requires 1-4 are descriptive features of any type of friendship and 5 to 7 are normative features of a good friendship. Nevertheless, in a certain sense the first four features could also be considered normative because they prescribe what a relationship with

⁶³Aristotle (EN 1166a1-10) mentions: "(1) A wishes and does goods or apparent goods to B for B's sake. (2) A wishes for B's life, for B's own sake. (3) A spends time with B. (4) A makes the same choices as B. (5) A Shares B's distress and enjoyment." (T. Irwin, notes to Book IX, Ch. 4).

someone must have in order to be considered a friendship. An important requirement that all seven of these features share is mutuality. This means I cannot say, for instance, that I am friends with a famous writer from the 18th century. I can admire Jane Austen's stories and style, I can try to emulate them, and in a way she talks to me, but I do not talk to her. We do not have a conversation, and she doesn't know me or appreciate me the way I know her and appreciate her.⁶⁴ Those are, then, prescriptive features in regard to other human relationships we may have.

Although I think that in some ways, friendship without qualification facilitates our moral and cognitive development,⁶⁵ my thesis requires a second level of normativity. Since the thesis is that character friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation, we must analyze requirements 5-7 in more detail. Those qualifications help us to distinguish other forms of friendship from the friendship I consider to be fundamental due to the fact that it provides a sort of experience, knowledge, and other emotions -besides admiration - that foster virtue. I hope to show how this works in Chapter III, but before jumping

⁶⁴ In the same vein, Nussbaum writes: "...*philia* must be distinguished from the sort of mutual admiration that could obtain between people who had no knowledge at all of one another. These people know each other, feel emotion for one another, wish and act well towards one another, and know that these relationships of thought, emotion, and action obtain between them." (1986: 355).

⁶⁵ I will talk more about this in Chapter IV, section 1.

there I want to suggest some of the possible reasons for the almost general neglect of friendship within traditional Western ethics.

3. Friendship and moral theory

There seem to be at least two main reasons to be suspicious about the moral value of friendship. The first reason is connected with the Aristotelian suggestion that friendship springs from self-love. If it is so then, according to some scholars, what we feel for our friends is rooted in egoistic interests. Since in order to be morally good I should accommodate more than just my interests, friendship does not have moral value. The second reason why friendship has been mostly neglected within moral theory has to do with the worry that even if my fondness for my friend springs originally from her, from a true love for her, and not just from my egoistic interests, my motivations are still partial. They are rooted in the fact that I have a relationship with her. Since according to the most traditional and influential moral theories a good moral justification must be impartial and universalizable, friendship does not provide good moral justifications. I will examine these two reasons in what follows.

3.1. Friendship, self-love, and egoism

The love we feel for our friends, according to Aristotle, springs from self-love (*NE*, Book IX, Ch. 8, and Irwin's note (p. 295)). If it is so, some claim, it is egoistic.⁶⁶

When Aristotle talks of the attitudes that belong to friendship, he claims that those attitudes derive from features of the virtuous person's attitude to himself (*NE*, IX, Ch. 4). In order to argue this, he holds (1) that there is at least one good kind of self-love, and (2) that the friend is another self.

Regarding (1), Aristotle thinks that there are two kinds of self-love, one that comes from the virtuous' observation of herself and the other that comes from the base' observation of herself. As we can expect, the prior is morally permissible but not the latter, because it derives from selfishness. Moreover, since this second form of self-love springs from competition with others in regard to the possession of goods such as money, honors, and bodily pleasures in which one gains while others lose, it is harmful for other people, as well as vicious (1168b17-9). Because this is the most common self-love, Aristotle argues, it is understandable that people think it is the only type, and they are

⁶⁶ On this, see Tara Smith (1993 and 2005). In her 2005, Smith argues some forms of egoism are compatible with true friendship. See also D. O. Brink (1993), who claims Aristotle justifies rational egoism with his conception of the friend as another self.

justified in reproaching it. The virtuous person, on the other hand, who “is always eager above all to do just or temperate actions or any other actions in accord with the virtues, and in general always gains for himself what is fine...” (NE 1168b25-7) is a real self-lover and his self-love is justified. Actions that come out of this kind of self-love are not selfish, and their underlying motive is benevolence. In this sense, Aristotle claims, it is clear that self-love is sometimes good, and this is why the virtuous person has it.⁶⁷

Second, since Aristotle conceives the friend as another self (1161b28, 1166a31), he argues that the virtuous person is justified in treating his friend as he treats himself (1166a30-5), and because of that he wants and seeks the best and finest for himself and his friend. Base people, on the contrary, cannot be friends with themselves (1166b3-25), they cannot have real love for themselves or seek for

⁶⁷ In regard to the Impartiality Vs. Partiality debate which will be considered in the next section, and the issue of self-interest as egoism, N. Sherman (1987) claims Aristotle (NE, IX) thinks there is an objectionable and an unobjectionable partiality toward the self: “In the first case an individual is partial to himself in the sense that he takes more than his fair share of certain “fought for” or scarce (*perima-chata*) goods. We rightly censure this individual for his actions involve a violation of justice; they are a case of *pleonexia*, taking for oneself what others have a legitimate claim to. In the second case an individual is partial in the sense that he desires to make his own character virtuous and to make himself the seat of virtue. This individual is not guilty of a criticizable self-interest, for in wanting that he be virtuous, he does not violate others' claims. The implication is that the end of virtue is not a scarce resource divided up by principles of distributive justice. Cf. 1168b15-16, 69a32; MM 1212b8-23” (p. 592).

what is really good for them, and that is why they cannot have complete friendships (1166b26-30).

I agree with (1) – that there is at least one good kind of self-love - in that self-love needs not to be selfish. People with good characters may recognize and appreciate their good character as they would appreciate it in anybody else. In fact, that is part of the reason why they engage in character friendship, because they identify someone with good character who appreciates it. Since proper self-love, as the love for a character friend, is rooted in the appreciation of good character, it is not selfish.

Moreover, we can grant that the attitudes toward our friend are the same as the attitudes we have toward ourselves, and deny that the love we feel for our friend springs only from self-love. In fact, if complete or character friendship requires that I desire my friend's well-being for her own sake, and not for mine, this means, first, that there must be a demarcation between me and my friend, and second, that my desiring her well-being cannot spring from self-love, even if this self-love is the proper kind. Rather, I must love her in herself, for who she is, and desire her well-being for her own sake. That this attitude is the same I have toward me (hypothetically assuming that I am virtuous) does not necessarily mean it comes from my attitude toward me, although the ground is the same: appreciation of a good

character.⁶⁸ If proper self-love is not selfish because it is grounded in the appreciation of my good character, Aristotle seems to argue, then my love for my friend grounded in the same way is not selfish either.

On the other hand, the other claim on which the objection of egoism relies is that, for Aristotle, (2) our friend is another self. I have talked above about what this means within the Aristotelian theory (section 3.2). We saw this conception of the friend as another *self* derives from his social conception of the self. It also appears to me that this notion of self is so important within Aristotelian theory because it implies an idea of embodiment. The good character that the friend loves in her friend is an embodied character. Such embodiment implies that these selves have particularities determined by concrete circumstances that must be taken into account when engaging in close relationships with them. In (1) Aristotle claims we love good characters, in (2) he claims those characters are embodied.⁶⁹

The notion of my friend as another self also seems to imply an emotional component: I should love my friend as I love myself.⁷⁰ It is

⁶⁸ This interpretation seems to be supported by Aristotle's emphasis in the *Rhetoric* in that friendship is a coincidence of wills (1381a10-11, 19-20, 32-34).

⁶⁹ With this he seems to tackle the objection raised against Plato, according to which he claims we love our friends just as instantiations of The Good. I talked about this in section 3.1.

⁷⁰ This sounds like the Christian precept "love your neighbor", which Schopenhauer endorsed. Nevertheless, it is different because it is conditional, in the sense that is

not just a matter of respect or consideration of the other's well-being, interpreted (as it traditionally is) as a cognitive task, from a "rational perspective." Friendship also requires emotional involvement, and a willingness to act in favor of the realization of such well-being.

As I understand it, seeing my friend as another self implies: (a) my identification with another and her well-being but, at the same time, (b) the recognition of a separation between me and my friend, and (c) the acceptance and emotional embracement of the similarities and the differences between us.

Thinking of my friend as another self does not mean, however, that her good is an extension of mine. In other words, accepting (a) does not entail that when someone acts seeking her friend's good she is simply promoting her own good:

For a genuine friend truly cares for the other for his own sake. He is willing to give of himself to promote the other's good; he understands the other in his own being and interests, and can distinguish the other's interests from his own, even while he is able to care deeply for their realization and in that sense identify the friend and his good... Thus the sense of identification involved in genuine friendship is not a matter of self-interest at all... (Blum, 1993: 200).

grounded in the good character of the other. Going even further, this idea of loving my friend as myself seems to go along with the *Gold Maxim* according to which we should not do to others what we do not want for ourselves. Friendship seems to be in an important sense a matter of taking especial care of selves. But again, in the case of character friendship this special care is conditioned.

That is what (a) and (b) mean. We recognize our separateness, and yet we think of our friend as another self.⁷¹ In this sense, like Blum claims, “the terms ‘egoism’ and ‘altruism’ as usually understood serve us ill in describing acting from friendship” (Blum, 1993: 201). It is so because although acting for my friend’s good for her own sake involves certain altruistic features - my actions are not well described as sacrifices. Since those actions are directed to my friend and I appreciate our relationship and its meaning in my life, they are not “disinterested” in the full sense. But as Blum points out, those concepts of *egoism* and *altruism* “are misleading in the context of any genuinely cooperative endeavor, i.e., one in which there is a shared goal among the participants...” (p. 202, note 10), and when the common goal is more than the sum of individual goals.⁷² Friendship seems a form of cooperative endeavor in this sense. Friends share values, ways of seeing and being in the world, projects and goals. Such sharing so central to friendship makes the identification of friends with each other and with their well-being necessary, but it does not make them indistinguishable and inseparable. And that is what (c)

⁷¹ See N. Sherman (1987: 607): “Aristotle says an adult friend is “another self,” but equally, in his own words, “a separate self” (*autos diairetos*) (EE 1245a30, a35; NE 117ob7, MM 1213a13, a24). This entails that such friends promote each other’s good in a privileged way (as only another self can), but in a way that is nonetheless mindful of the mature rational agency of each.”

⁷² This goes in tune with Aristotle’s remark that “The proverb ‘What friends have is common’ is correct, since friendship involves community” (1159b31-2, 1171b33-5).

means; in complete friendship we are involved with the other in a deep way that affects our whole being, our way of understanding, feeling, and acting in the world.

To finish this section I want to highlight something else. At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that Aristotle claims friendship is a virtue or involves virtue. I gave some reasons to treat friendship not as a virtue but as involving virtue. But if Aristotle also thought friendship is a virtue, it is, along with justice, a special virtue. That is so because friendship, analyzed as a virtue, cannot be defined as a *personal* character trait since it doesn't depend solely on the agent. It requires others, and those others involved must be engaged in a specific way: they must be appreciated by themselves. Friendship implies the cultivation, with other who is valued, of something valuable outside of me. This is another good reason to reject the idea that friendship is selfish. Nevertheless, even if we succeed in showing that friendship is not rooted in an egoist interest, but on a genuine appreciation of the friend's self, we can still doubt the moral justification of the concern for particular persons. This is what I will examine in the next section.

3.2. The Impartialism vs. Partialism Debate⁷³

Friendship is an interesting phenomenon because while it has been acknowledged by most moral philosophers, its place within moral theory is not clear. The most pressing question seems to be about the justification of a special concern for one person, which opens up a more general debate about how are we to justify partial concerns over impartial concerns.

Kant (1775-1780), for instance, claimed that friendship "...is the whole end of man, through which he can enjoy his existence," (215) but at the same time he considered it problematic, something that must be replaced by a higher social concern. He says "Friendship is not of heaven but of earth; the complete moral perfection of heaven must be universal; but friendship is not universal" (in Pakaluk, 1991: 215). After all, if what is morally relevant in our acts is whether they conform to the Categorical Imperative, there doesn't seem to be much room for concerns for particular individuals.⁷⁴ What matters is our compromise with the universal.⁷⁵ So while Kantians could allow

⁷³ According to D. Parfit, 2003, another way to see the debate is Moral Theory vs. Common Sense Morality.

⁷⁴ See Bernard Williams (1976), where he claims that for Kantians, "...the moral point of view is specially characterized by its impartiality and its indifference to any particular relations to particular persons" (p. 198).

⁷⁵ See also S. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (1846-47), where he says that my love to my friend has moral value only insofar as it comes from a love that I would have for my neighbor, for any human being.

friendly actions, the justification of those actions would come from their observance of the moral duty, not from love for the friend.

On the other hand, teleological or consequentialist theories claim that what is morally relevant in the assessment of acts is the extent to which their consequences maximize the good of the greatest number of individuals. Since friendship seems to fulfill a human need and bring happiness to individuals, it is justified. Friendly actions could increase overall well-being.⁷⁶ Here again, the moral value of caring about and acting for the good of my friend is grounded not out of concern for my friend for her own sake but in contribution to the general good.

The problem, then, is that while the moral value of friendship involves concern for another for her sake as the particular person she is, the most salient moral theories tell us that we should expand the horizon of our concerns and aim at general and universal ideas or principles. That is, we should try to be impartial. This is why both consequentialism and deontology would recommend friendly actions

⁷⁶ This may sound similar to the justification within virtue theory. It is different, nevertheless, because although both the consequentialist and the virtue theorist could be thinking in the same outcome, the latter thinks such outcome cannot be possible without the proper motivations to act. Those motivations, within virtue theory, might include overall happiness as a final goal, but are also constituted by the genuine appreciation and love for the friend.

under impartial reasons. This way of seeing friendship is subject to several objections.

First of all, it seems to entail the idea that friends are interchangeable, which leads us to the fungibility problem.⁷⁷ Second, it appears to neglect an important part of the sources of meaning and value of our moral lives and, as a consequence, an important source of moral motivation. According to Michael Stocker (1976), this generates a lack of harmony or integration between reasons and motives to act that leads to moral schizophrenia⁷⁸. Here it is Stocker's indirect way of showing us how:

My criticism runs as follows: Hedonistic egoists take their own pleasure to be the sole justification of acts, activities, ways of life; they should recognize that love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community are among the greatest (sources of) personal pleasures. Thus, they have good reason, on their own grounds, to enter such relations. But they cannot act in the ways required to get those pleasures, those great goods, if they act on their motive of pleasure-for-self. They cannot act for the sake of the intended beloved, friend, and so on; thus, they cannot love, be or have a friend, and so on. To achieve these great personal goods, they have to abandon that egoistical motive. They cannot embody their reason in their motive. Their reasons and motives make their moral lives schizophrenic. (p. 457).

⁷⁷ I analyzed this before in section 3.1.

⁷⁸ B. Williams (1976) makes a similar point. He claims that the usual characterization incorrectly assumes the impartial point of view is moral whereas the partial point of view is non-moral, and that there is a "special dignity or supremacy attached to the moral," and something wrong in acting by partial reasons (p. 198).

Stocker further argues that the same applies to consequentialists and deontologists: if they engage in friendship for the sake of goodness but not for the sake of their friends, they do not have true friendship. So, Stocker claims, “The problem with these theories is not [...] with *other*-people-as-valuable. It is simply- or not so simply -with *people*-as-valuable.” (p. 459).

There have been several responses from deontologist and consequentialists to try to accommodate friendship in their framework in a way that does not jeopardize the concern for the friend as the person she is.⁷⁹ But since I think the most relevant question for my current project here is why Aristotle placed friendship in such a central role in his virtue theory, I will not focus on consequentialist or deontological theories of friendship.

According to Aristotle, “No one can have complete friendship for many people, just as no one can have an erotic passion for many at the same time; for [complete friendship, like erotic passion] is like an excess, and an excess is naturally directed at a single individual” (NE 1158a11).⁸⁰ We are authorized (even sometimes compelled) to

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Barbara Herman (1984). Scott Woodcock (2010) agrees with Stocker in that contemporary moral theories impose a sort of “scquizophrenic moral psychology,” and claims that although this is not a *reductio* of those theories, the burdens of such moral psychology “are both acceptable and deserving of serious consideration” (p. 2).

⁸⁰ Aristotle defines virtue as a mean between two excesses. The fact that he claims here complete friendship is like an excess seems to be another good reason to say

pay more attention to our family and friends than we are required to do it with strangers (1160a1-8). But at the same time we should always aim at the finest actions and ends (1109a25-30), which seem in many respects also independent of our particular interests (since the finest is identifiable with what constitutes and promotes human flourishing). What is the place of friendship in this picture?

Recall Aristotle claims there are three kinds of friendship, either based on utility, on pleasure, or on virtue, and that only the last one is considered complete or full friendship. With Cooper, I call it character friendship. The other two are friendships just in the sense that they resemble to a certain extent the best form of the relationship. Due to Aristotle's characterization of complete or character friendship, some have argued that the concern for a friend with whom we have this relationship could be seen as appealing to partial and impartial reasons at the same time.

I have characterized character friendship as a relationship between two people based on the mutual appreciation of the good character or virtues of each other, in which they wish and act for the other's good for her own sake, and in which they know of this mutual disposition and enjoy the other's company (section 2). They do not

he doesn't think friendship *is* a virtue, but *involves* virtue. I gave some additional reasons for this interpretation at the beginning of this chapter.

have to be fully virtuous agents to engage in this relationship, and they do not have to be equally developed either. What seems more important is their recognition of the value of having a good character and their commitment to the cultivation of it.

In this sense, it is said, in character friendship friends care for each other on impartial grounds: on the appreciation of their good character. Concern for our character-friend as another self is justified by appeal to good character. According to Jennifer Whiting (1991), for instance, Aristotelian friendship, as opposed to “brute” friendship in which the relationship just happens to exist, regardless of the other’s characteristics, is justified by our concern for our friend’s character, projects and commitments. Nevertheless, since this sole answer “involves rejecting the importance traditionally attached to the distinction between self and other and focusing instead on the character of *whomever* - oneself or another - is the intended object of concern” (Whiting, 1991: 6), it seems it could lead to the fungibility problem again. If what matters is not the friend as a person, but rather a type of character (the virtuous character), the relationship does not seem to be grounded in my love for my friend for her own sake as the person she is.⁸¹

⁸¹ Recall this is an objection usually directed towards the Platonic view on love and friendship, see section 3.1.

Another interpretation advanced is that it is *my relationship* to my friend what makes her valuable and non-exchangeable. It is because I happen to be bound to her and she happens to be bound to me that we think and feel each other is special.⁸² When we first meet a new friend, there is not time to make all those considerations about her good character that the previous view requires, and we just embarked in the relationship without knowing the other person well enough to say whether she had a good character or whether she was well committed to improve it. In this sense, the character-friendship account is artificial.⁸³ With time and commitment to each other and the

⁸² See, for instance, E. Millgram (1987), who defends an interesting interpretation in this direction. According to him, the relationship between friends is an instance of the procreation relation, like that of parents and their children, or poets and their poems. Millgram claims this explains the special concern we have for our friends as other selves, and explains also why we love virtue in our friends and not in whomever virtuous person.

⁸³ See Diane Jeske (1997): "Character friendship is a tempting ideal, but, I think, it is clear that it betrays our actual moral experience, and overestimates the role of choice in the determination of friends. We often begin interacting with persons with whom we think we have much in common, only to learn later that they differ from us significantly. But through our interactions, we develop affection and concern for that other person - we find that we are friends, before we really understand the other's character. So friendship is more like familial relationships than the Aristotelian model allows. This is not to say that there is no element of choice in friendship; as I indicated in section VII above, when deciding whether to form any given friendship, we must weigh our reasons, moral and prudential, before acting. Coming to know other people, however, is a complex and difficult process, because persons are not transparent. We are not, at the time of first meeting an individual, in any position to fully judge her character or what the character of a friendship with her would be. Sometimes we must become friends with someone, i.e. begin responding to her with care and openness, before we can come to know that person. Also, as with many other decisions, we often will lose opportunities for friendships if we deliberate too long or too often before making

relationship, we started seeing the value in us. In this sense, they say, the relationship itself bestows value to the friends.

This strategy, nevertheless, is accused of being egocentric since the value of the other seems to derive from my friend's relationship to *me*.⁸⁴ The other's good is considered part or extension of my own good, and I end up again putting aside my friend's good for her own sake.⁸⁵ This way of understand the source of the value of the friend and my relationship with her seems to take us again to the partial extreme. Whiting (1991) claims, for instance, that this appears to "involve either misrepresentation or potentially objectionable colonization" (p. 9) of the other's self. So she goes back to the suggestion of interpret Aristotle as adopting a generic strategy in which the ground of the concern for our friends is the substance or content of their character, independently of their relationship to us.

the first steps. Even the most rational individual must sometimes just act, given the opaqueness of persons, and the fact that opportunities for friendship do not come along every day" (p. 71).

⁸⁴ See, for instance, D. Parfit (2003) characterization of this view. He claims theories that are agent based like this one are directly self-defeating because the good of the outcomes of our actions should be preferred over who perform them. In other words, it shouldn't matter if *I* do or *you* do something good for our children, for instance, as long as our children are fine and get the good outcomes (see especially Chapter One, part 4).

⁸⁵ For more on why this is a wrong characterization of the concern in friendship, see Lawrence Blum (1993, specially section V). He is against this form of present the value and importance of the relationship for the friends, because among them operates what he calls "conditional altruism," which has moral value (see especially sections VII and VIII).

This will give us, she claims, “character relative” or “ethocentric” reasons for action (p. 11).

Now, remember I suggested to connect the Aristotelian claim according to which what we love (in ourselves and in others) is *good character*, with his *social and embodied conception of the self*. It seems that the ambiguity of the Aristotelian view in regard to the place of friendship within the debate impartialism/partialism has its roots in the fact that those notions are treated as separated. Some say his view implies that we either love good characters *or* we love our friend. But I think those notions go together, since I assume that the conception of a person’s self includes her character. The definition of a person includes the way she characteristically acts, thinks, her main interests, commitments, projects, and all of this is part of what her character is, or derives from it. Like Bernard Williams (1976: 201) puts it “...an individual person has a set of desires, concerns, or as I shall often call them, projects, which help to constitute a character.” He understands character as “having projects and categorical desires with which one is identified” (p. 210). In this sense, it seems right to say that loving my friend in herself, for who she is, need not be different from loving her, in part, for her character. According to Whiting (1991), we can interpret Aristotle as holding this view:

Aristotle did not distinguish disinterested affection for a person from the appreciation of her excellences because he took the appreciation of her excellences as such (and not as instruments for one's own benefit) to constitute disinterested affection for her (p. 14).

Does this solve the impartialism vs. partialism debate regarding the place of friendship within moral theory? I am not sure this debate can be solved, because I think it comes from a shortsighted view of morality. It comes from the assumption that our concerns, in order to count as moral, must be impartial. This is why we feel that we need to justify our concern for our friends. But human morality encompasses both partial and impartial concerns, and moral theory should be able to give room to these two kinds of sources of motivations in order to be complete.

True friendship is possible only if there is a genuine concern for the person that my friend is, as she is. That is, true friendship is possible only if it is motivated by a partial concern, and this concern is a moral concern. It is justified precisely because it springs from a genuine interest for the other's good for her own sake. Genuine concern for one person is as moral as genuine concern for all humanity.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See Lawrence Blum (1993), who claims that "the moral excellence of friendship involves a high level of development and expression of the altruistic emotions of sympathy, concern, and care..." (p. 195). He argues that what we do for our friends

A careful look at our day to day moral life will show us that sometimes we are required to act out of an impartial concern, and other times out of a partial concern.⁸⁷ Moreover, with Lawrence Blum (1980) I think impartiality is required only in specific cases. Say, for instance, when we are enacting within our institutional roles. If we are a physician, a teacher, a judge, a secretary... we are obliged to treat everybody's concerns impartially. If our friend arrives and needs a specific treatment from us while many other people do too, we must treat her concern like anybody's concern. Like Blum puts it, the important point here is that having a concern for our friends does not conflict with having impartial concerns:

It is not violation of impartiality if I phone my friend to see if he is feeling better, knowing that he has been ill. Such a situation of acting from concern for a friend does not impose on me the obligation to take into account the interests of all the people whom I *might* help at that point in time, and to choose according to some impartial criterion whom to benefit. (p. 46)

is not motivated by self-interest (caring for the other as an extension of oneself, p. 200), nor by self-sacrifice (p. 201).

⁸⁷ According to N. Sherman (1987), Aristotle exhibits this position too: "Aristotle includes motives of attachment within the ethical sphere, while still acknowledging constraints on their permissibility. So in general, Aristotle says, friends are to be preferred in the assignment of our help and aid (1155a7-9; 1160a1-8) but not always and not at all costs. For example, it would be wrong to help a friend before returning benefits due others, or to give a loan to friends before repaying a creditor, "except when helping a friend is especially fine or necessary" (1164b25-1165 a4). Similarly, partiality is inappropriate in specific contexts, such as in the case of a public official where the fair adjudication of claims is a part of the description of that office (1134a33-35b1)" (p. 591).

Going even further, in everyday life accurate moral responses would mostly require from us that we pay attention to concerns of particulars. We have to act as sons, daughters, siblings, spouses, parents, friends, members of our community - and proper responses there require that we give special weight to those relationships and the particular people involved. This does not mean, however, that we have no duties outside of these circles: "The point is that strict impartiality is not required or appropriate, but neither is ignoring the interests of others simply because the weal and woe of one's friend is at stake" (Blum, 1980: 49).

It appears that since we have no clear notion of the kind of goods we can and must bring about to others, we tend to picture friends and non-friends as competing for our attention and care at one and the same time. But as Blum highlights, the picture in which friends and non-friends are competing for our beneficence is artificial and misleading. Giving advice and criticism to a friend, for instance, or comforting her about a private tragedy, or helping her to decorate her backyard, are not the kind of goods that I am obligated to give to non-friends and to feel guilty about for not doing so. It is not that I cannot advise, criticize, comfort, and help to decorate the house of a stranger, but rather that while those goods seem to be properly required by friendship we should not feel that they are required by all humanity.

Those goods are an integral part of what being a friend is, and strictly speaking it seems that the sort of trust, knowledge, and intimacy achieved through friendship make it easier and more natural to provide them accurately and beneficially to our friends than to strangers.⁸⁸ I may comfort my friend just by being by her side, in her presence, without need of a word, but for a distressed stranger my presence may not be comforting and could be discomfoting or even threatening. In this sense, what I should do for a friend is not comparable with what I should do for non-friends, "and therefore when we do something for our friends it is wrong to picture us as choosing

⁸⁸ In this regard, see Nussbaum (1979: 159) "The lover's understanding, attained through the responsive communion of sense, emotion, and intellect (any one of which, once well trained, may perform a cognitive function in exploring and informing us concerning the others) yields particular truths and particular judgments. It insists that those particular intuitive judgments are prior to any universal rules we may be using to guide us. I decide how to respond to my lover not on the basis of definitions or general prescriptions, but on the basis of an intuitive sense of the person and the situation, which, although guided by my general theories, is not subservient to them. This does not mean that my judgments and responses are not rational. Indeed, Alcibiades would claim that a Socratic adherence to rule and refusal to see and feel the particular as such is what is irrational. To have seen that, and how, Socrates is like nobody else, to respond to him as such and to act accordingly, is the deeply rational way to behave towards another individual. The man bound by rules looks, from this viewpoint, like one afraid to see. The Socratic claim to have a general deductive science (episteme) of the good and of love now begins to appear as weird as Socrates. Perhaps "such cases do not fall under any science or precept, but the agents themselves must consider what suits the occasion, as is also the case in medicine and in navigation" (Aristotle, EN 1104a3-10). "The universal must come from the particulars; and of these one must have perception, and this is nous" (EN 1143b4-5). She thinks the Symposium urges us to make a choice between loving the universal or loving the particular, and that the options are mutually exclusive.

not to do the same or something comparable for someone else” (Blum, 1980: 57). That is why “...acting morally is not always or fundamentally a matter of equality or impartiality towards all. For this is not what it is to act morally within friendship” (Blum, 1980: 55). Friendship involves a form of conditional altruism (the condition is my special relationship to the other, present also in some other forms of altruism) for my friend that is justified as long as such concern does not stem from self-concern, and does not involve a despicable attitude towards those outside the relationship:

It is important to recognize that genuine devotion to a particular group – family, neighborhood, ethnic community, ethnic group, club - is in itself morally good, and becomes morally suspect only when it involves a deficient stance towards others... Moral philosophy ought to be able to give expression to the moral value of such an attitude, and an exclusively universalist perspective cannot do so. (Blum, 1993: 206)

The notion of “genuine devotion” to loved ones or to a group is meant to sort out a valid source of suspicion against partialism, which is that it could justify impermissible practices like racism, for instance, or the maintenance of oppressive relationships. Racists seem to believe that those from their same group are better than the ones outside it, and that this justifies a negative and differential treatment to the outside members. Nevertheless, like Blum suggests, genuine devotion to the members of our group has two conditions, (1) it must spring from a concern for the other for their own sake, which I am not

sure racism could fulfill, and (2) it must exclude any bad attitude towards others outside the circle, which racism does not fulfill for sure. The same applies to devotion to our friends: it must spring from a concern from them for their own sake, and must exclude a bad attitude toward others.

Moreover, like Marilyn Friedman (1991) argues, the moral defense of partialism depends on the quality of relationships that it helps to sustain. In this sense, only “qualified partialism,” understood as the partialism that helps to sustain close relationships characterized by integrity and fulfillment of those involved, is morally justifiable.⁸⁹

To sum up, in this section I have been arguing in favor of the idea that a complete moral theory should accommodate both impartial and partial concerns. My aim was not to defend partialism as such, but rather argue for the recognition that genuine (partial) concern for our loved ones is as moral as the (impartial) concern for all humanity.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ In the same vein of defense of the moral value of qualified particularism, see Tedesco (2004). He claims that friendship is morally defensible in spite of the particularism that it entails, only insofar as we are talking of certain forms of friendships.

⁹⁰ Nevertheless, I agree with Friedman (1991) in that both ideas of partiality and impartiality need to be revised and qualified.

Chapter III

Friendship as a source of knowledge, emotions, and praxis necessary for the cultivation of virtues

“Unlike the Kantian, then, Aristotle does not merely permit attachment within a theory of morality constituted primarily by impartiality. Rather, he makes attachment essential to the expression of virtue and living with friends a structural feature of good living...”
N. Sherman (1987: 593)

1. Some caveats

First, friendship defined as mutual well-wishing, care, and acknowledgment of this mutuality plays a role in moral growth. This definition encompasses the three kinds of friendships defined by Aristotle (see Cooper, 1980), which means pleasure friendships and advantage friendships can also contribute to our moral development. Nevertheless, the thesis defended here is that complete or character friendship plays a more fundamental role in the cultivation of virtue. That is so due to the nature of virtue (briefly explored in Chapter I, sections 1 and 2), and the nature of character friendship (explored in Chapter II). In this chapter we will explore in more detail how this works.

Second, the thesis according to which friendship plays a fundamental role in the moral development of human beings does not

mean that friendship is necessary for human life in the sense that a human would not survive without friends. It means, rather, that friendship is necessary for a *good human life*. This thesis is prescriptive, because it is not about human life and friendship in general, but about *good* human lives and *good* friendships. Against Tedesco (2004), this means there are goods of friendship which are *necessary for a good human life*, and also that friendship is in a way unique because it gives us goods that nothing else can give us.

Third, the thesis here defended by no means implies a merely instrumental view of the value of friendship. In Aristotelian terms it is mistaken to think that the value of character friendship is purely instrumental: that it is solely a means for attaining virtues. However, it would also be a mistake to think of the value of friendship as purely intrinsic. This is because, according to Aristotle, friendship's non-instrumental value consists in the fact that it is a constitutive part of human *eudaimonia*. In this sense, its value is intrinsic but also relational. In other words, friendship's intrinsic goodness does not derive just from its intrinsic properties but rather from its relation to human *eudaimonia*. This does not make friendship's value purely

instrumental⁹¹ or purely extrinsic.⁹² Following Christine Korsgaard's (1983) taxonomy of kinds of goodness, we could say that friendship's value is non-instrumental because it is not valued just as a mean to something else, but also as an end in itself.⁹³ And friendship's value is not extrinsic either because the source of its value is not outside of it; it is in itself *and* its relation to *eudaimonia*.⁹⁴

And finally, I want to make clear again that I do not intend to develop an exhaustive account about the cultivation of every virtue, nor even about the cultivation of a particular virtue. Rather, I am thinking of a sort of necessary ground for the cultivation of the virtues in general (I mentioned this in Chapter I, section 2). I have claimed I subscribe to Sherman's suggestion according to which we can talk of

⁹¹ For a good explanation of the distinction non-instrumental/intrinsic/extrinsic, see Mark Schroeder (2012): SEP <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-theory/index.html#IntVal>. A criticism of friendship as merely instrumental seems to be at the heart of Carol Gilligan's criticisms of Kohlberg (C. Gilligan, 1982).

⁹² Although, according to Christine Korsgaard (1983), the contrast between instrumental and intrinsic value is false, and the natural contrast to intrinsic value is extrinsic, since it refers to the source of the value, "...rather than the way we value the thing" (p. 170).

⁹³ In other words, friendship has both instrumental and intrinsic value (on this, see also N. Sherman, 1987: 593-5).

⁹⁴ In the same vein, see Brewer (2005), where he claims: "This is not to suggest that the point of Aristotelian friendship is to make people virtuous. Such friendship is intrinsically valuable and ought to be pursued as such. Indeed, neither genuine Aristotelian friendship nor its attendant benefits can be attained by those who value their friends merely as a means to some further good, including the good of self-improvement." (p. 3, note 3). Or Cooper (1985) who claims that the instrumentality of friendship is not necessarily incompatible with friends being valued for other reasons, for example for their own sake.

“...virtue in a general way as a complex of capacities—perceptual, affective, and deliberative,” and say something about how these capacities are cultivated (Sherman, 1991: 166). I also think of virtues here in general terms, as a sort of complex of capacities, and my goal is to show the role of character friendship in their cultivation.

In chapter II, I subscribed to the Aristotelian definition of friendship as a relationship characterized by mutual affection, well-wishing, and mutual acknowledgment of this well-wishing and affection. I have also said that although different forms of friendship (based on pleasure or utility, for instance) contribute in distinct ways to our moral development, it is fundamentally character friendship which helps us in our process of virtue cultivation. Because of that, I tried to see what a character friend is, and found that it is a friend we love mainly because of her good character - her good (moral and intellectual) qualities. Following Bukowski and Sippola (1996) I think that good or character friends are similar to each other in that they share “...a concern or appreciation for constructs concerned with goodness, such as generosity, honesty, kindness, loyalty, and authenticity...” (p. 242).

Along with this, I also subscribed to the Aristotelian idea according to which our friend is a mirror, another self (NE 1161b28, 1166a30-33, 1166b1, 1169b5-7, 1170a2-4, b6-8, 1170b6f, 1171a20,

and 1171b33). Since good friends base their relationship in the acknowledgment and appreciation of their good, if not-yet-perfect, characters, this friendship is preceded by a certain similarity in their good character. But what is it about this relationship with someone else that is so special? Why should we think that such a relationship is important for the process of virtue cultivation?

2. What makes friendship special?

“Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes that correct perception cannot be learned by precept, but only through and in one’s own experience. If we now think what it would be to understand another person in this Aristotelian way, we begin to see that this understanding could not possibly be acquired through a general description, through reading an encomium or a character-portrait, or, indeed, by any distant and non-engaged relationship. It requires the experience of shared activity and the cultivation, over time, and through the trust that comes only with time, of an intimate responsiveness to that person in feeling, thought, and action.”

Nussbaum (1986: 364-5).

2.1. *The desire or need of sharing: friendship as a unique form of experience*

In Chapter II, section 1.2. I claimed that one of the most salient features of friendship is that it is constitutive of human flourishing. I argued it is so mainly because human beings are social, and because of that we need societies but also need close and intimate relationships. Friendship stands as a special kind of such close and intimate relationship, mainly because through it the human

excellences or virtues are exercised. Friendship plays a fundamental role in the development of the kind of theoretical and practical reason that make a flourishing human life possible partly because, as Aristotle claims, one of the most important things that friends do is share 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” (Aristotle, NE 1170b12-14).

The term *homonoia*, usually translated as concord or consensus (1167a23), is the term used to refer this Aristotelian notion of the sharing that is so fundamental to friendship - closer to co-inhabiting a way of living, thinking, seeing, and feeling in the world than to the idea of co-inhabiting a space.⁹⁵ Such shared views have as their corollary shared activities, which could include appropriate eating, talking, investment of money, of free time, and so on. That is why Aristotle also claims friends share “distress and enjoyment” (NE 1166a1-10).

Although occasional sharing is needed as a pre-condition for character friendship, a sustained sense of sharing over time is even

⁹⁵ For more on this, see Nussbaum (1986: 358, 369).

more important. This sense of sharing is constructed through the history of the relationship, and involves more than just commonality. It has both epistemic and creative functions because it implies mutual knowledge and a certain shaping of one friend to another. Such sustained sharing between the friends can, for instance, create some new characteristics in them.

Think about two friends, Andrea and Mia, who have been friends for 5 years. Andrea loves romantic comedy movies but Mia cannot stand them, and prefers drama movies instead. Andrea, on the other hand, finds drama movies unbearable. Because they want to share time together, each of them think of good examples of movies in the genre they like so that they could show their friend the value of them and enjoy their time watching movies together. Over time, Mia can say there are at least some good romantic comedy movies, and Andrea can say the same about drama movies. They have expanded their tastes, at least in this regard, and something similar can happen on a much deeper level. By sharing with friends we may consider another ways to think about other people, other relationships, and even about the values and principles that guide our lives.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ On how friends provide us new perspectives to evaluate our own principles, see Friedman (1989: 9).

In some other cases, the epistemic and creative functions of the sharing that is central to character friendship has been described as having a sort of reformative force. Brewer (2005), for instance, claims that one of the core components of the Aristotelian conception of friendship is that of shareability (p. 723). Talking about how the character friends' sharing forms and corrects them, he claims:

The fundamental and quite plausible idea here is that love of the good is fostered and refined only insofar as one's socialization is guided by a friend with a properly ordered *nous*. Such relationships provide a context within which we are able to find lovable in another that other's commitment to what is good in itself. [...] Virtue, understood as a love of the fine that shows up in the concrete form of consistently good actions, arises in us and is strengthened to the extent that our relationships approximate the proper *telos* of character friendships. These relationships can provide the sort of external, objectivity-tracking formative and corrective mechanism for our characteristic affects that isolated practical reflection alone is unable to provide. (p. 749)

Brewer argues that is so because this sharing functions as a proper arena to test and correct our evaluative outlooks, and to look for the way to make them as close to an objective good as possible (p. 726-734). In the same vein, Marilyn Friedman (1989) claims the moral growth facilitated by friendship depends on sharing between the friends:

My own discussion does not depend on the nature of the friendship in question. The notion of moral growth which I discuss [...] requires only that there be a sharing of personal experiences between the friends, whatever the motivation for this sharing, and that each friend trust the other to be what I call a "reliable moral witness", the

reliability in question having as much to do with epistemic capacity as it does with moral goodness. (M. Friedman, 1989: 12, note 2).

Moral growth is facilitated, in Friedman's view, by a sort of expansion of our own experience through sharing with our friends (p. 7), which is different from the expansion of experience we gain from reading literature in that friends interact with us, but also in the authenticity of the shared stories (p. 10).

My view is that this form of sharing in which character friendship consists is a privileged source of a certain kind of motivation (via knowledge and emotions) necessary for the cultivation and exercise of virtue. This sharing facilitates the acquisition of a special form of knowledge and the development of certain emotions that move us toward virtue, creating at the same time the perfect arena for its exercise. These are the subjects of the next two sections.

2. 2. Friendship as a privileged source of knowledge necessary for cultivation of virtue: knowledge of particulars

"The issue is not simply that our own eyes are biased, but more generally, that the project of self-knowledge requires external dialogue and audience. We need "to live together with friends and share in argument and thought" in order to be fully conscious of the sorts of lives we are leading (1170b11-12).

Without friends, we act in blindness about who we really are, and indeed lack true practical reason"

N. Sherman, 1987: 611-2.

According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of knowledge which are different in nature: scientific knowledge and practical knowledge. Each has a distinctive method, object, and goal. He claims scientific knowledge is concerned with universals (1139b29-36) whereas practical knowledge or wisdom is mostly concerned with particulars (1107a31-32, 1110b6-7, 1110b31-1111a2, 1111a22-24, and 1141b15-24).⁹⁷

Aristotle argues there are “five states in which the soul grasps the truth [...]: craft knowledge, scientific knowledge, prudence, wisdom, and understanding” (1139b16-8), and that “we ascribe consideration, comprehension, prudence, and understanding to the same people... for all these capacities are about the last things, i.e., particulars.” (1143a27-30). Practical wisdom is concerned both with universals and particulars (1141b15, 1142a15), but mostly with the “ultimate particular” (1142a23). Moreover, from the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) Aristotle argues that the end of ethical inquiry is happiness and is realized in the actions of particular agents (1095a4-6, 1179a35b4, 1098a16-18, and 1098b18-20). Because practical wisdom is concerned with actions, and actions have to do

⁹⁷ As we can see, 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).

with particulars, practical wisdom requires knowledge of particulars, among which, I think, are individuals.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, it is clear to Aristotle that we cannot attain scientific knowledge (*episteme*) of particulars (NE 1180b13-23, 1142a11-25) because they are variable. Scientific knowledge is about what is, by necessity, and implies knowing the reason or cause of regular phenomena, their explanation and the principles that rule them (Met. 981b10-13). This cannot be said of variable phenomena, of “what admits being otherwise” (1140b26-29). But we can attain a certain kind of knowledge of particulars through experience (Met. 981a12-24; NE 1112b34-1113a2):

In a theoretical science like physics, experience has the single role of serving as the stepping stone to our grasp of universals. In practical knowledge, experience has not only this role but also the more important one of providing a grasp of the salient features of particular situations in which decisions are to be made. The knowledge of particulars provided by experience “completes” practical knowledge, assuring that it achieves its end in action. (Devereux, 1986: 498).

⁹⁸ There is a dispute about this interpretation. According to Cooper’s (*Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, 1975: p. 30) Aristotle is referring here to particulars as a class, not to individuals. Devereux (1986) claims that by knowledge of “particulars” Aristotle does not mean knowledge of specific types or knowledge of concrete individuals, but “...knowledge of facts based on experience, and these facts may or may not be about specific individuals.” (p. 492). I agree with Devereux in that it could refer both to specific kinds of situations and to individuals.

The virtuous agent's exercise of practical wisdom partly consists in knowing or "seeing" the salient features of a situation that call her to act in a certain way. She needs to be attentive to context, and that implies knowing the particulars in it, amongst which are individuals. All sorts of different human experiences and relationships help us to know the particulars, understood as situations and individuals (persons). My thesis is that a special and unique kind of knowledge of human beings is provided by friendship, due to the experience that its sharing provides. But what kind of knowledge is this?

According to Nussbaum, the knowledge of the particular other is not reducible to knowledge by description or knowledge by acquaintance,⁹⁹ because it is also a "knowing how" (1979: 160)¹⁰⁰. In other words, it is not just a matter of whether knowing my friend amounts to having a judgement or a concept of her (which would be knowledge by description), or if it is having direct awareness of her, as someone "given" or "presented" to me without mediation of judgement or concept (knowledge by acquaintance), because it implies another kind of knowledge: knowing how to act toward her or with her. Here,

⁹⁹ In modern philosophy, the distinction is attributed to Bertrand Russell (1910-11).

¹⁰⁰ The distinction between "knowing-how" and "knowing-that" (or "propositional knowledge") was made by Gilbert Ryle (1949).

the notion of *knowing how* could be better understood as a sort of ability or disposition to act appropriately. In Nussbaum's words:

Alcibiades suggests, then, that there is a kind of practical understanding, an understanding of the good and the beautiful, that consists in a keen responsiveness of intellect, imagination, and feeling to the particulars of a situation: an ability to pick out its salient features, combined with a disposition to act appropriately as a result. Of this sort of intuitive practical wisdom the lover's understanding of the particular beloved is a central and particularly deep case—and not only a case among cases, but one whose resulting self-understanding might be fundamental to the flourishing of practical wisdom in other areas of life as well. (p. 160)

My knowledge of my good friend is not reducible to my being able to describe her, to say things about her, or to my bare perception of her. It entails, over all, my ability or disposition to see, to understand, and to act in a way that will be aware and attentive to her specific best interests and needs – it entails not just that I know how to be a friend, but that I know how to be *her* friend. More broadly, is a disposition to act in a way that takes care of my friend's self, the cultivation of her excellences and the seeking of her well-being for her own sake. In this sense, friendship has epistemic value because it allows us to know in a special way.

First, friendship is a relationship that gives the parties knowledge of the particular persons they are.¹⁰¹ For example, we

¹⁰¹ 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

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 take¹⁰².

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

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.¹⁰² For more on this, see Friedman (1989), where she claims her position is empiricist because it considers experience as fundamental for moral knowledge. In this way, she argues, friendship provide us with at least two different kinds of inductive moral knowledge: "First, one can see how a friend is affected by the various social arrangements in which she lives and by the behavior of others toward her. These effects reveal something about the adequacy of the standards which shape the social arrangements and the human actions which impinge upon her. Second, one can observe how the course of her life "tests" the moral guidelines according to which she herself lives. One can reflect on that which motivates, guides, or affects her. One will be inspired to take it seriously because one takes her seriously. It becomes a living option for oneself. Through intimate knowledge of one's friend, one participates vicariously in the living which embodies and realizes her divergent values. One learns what life is like for someone who is motivated by springs of action different from one's own, and one sees how the moral abstractions which inform and affect her life fare in practice" (p. 9).

transparent to ourselves,¹⁰³ 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.¹⁰⁴

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 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.*)

¹⁰³ Self-knowledge has been a big source of discussion within philosophy. The ancient aphorism "Know Thyself" is still a matter of debate. In contemporary terms, the issue about the possibility of self-knowledge just via introspection, for instance, is called into question. For more on this, see Jesse Wade Butler (2006) and Anthony Hatzimoysis (2011).

¹⁰⁴ In the same vein, N. Sherman (1987: p. 611) claims: "...knowing the heart, Kant tells us, is a difficult and seemingly inscrutable matter. We can never be fully sure if we have told ourselves the truth. However there are ways of knowing the heart explicit in an Aristotelian account of friendship that need to be explored if the issue of transparency is indeed to be taken seriously. These involve, as we have just seen, informal methods of self-reflection that seem possible only within intimate and trusting relations. Before a friend, Aristotle suggests, we can bare ourselves, and acknowledge the foibles and weaknesses we hide from others (Rh. 11.6)."

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.¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ 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 general 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

¹⁰⁵ For the importance of the concept of *narrative* in moral discourse, see A. MacIntyre (1981).

¹⁰⁶ Concerning the value of literature and movies for moral understanding, see Nussbaum (1995).

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, who actual need us, as we need them.

Before moving forward, it is important to mention a corollary of this knowledge provided by friendship, related to the next section due to its conative force: this particular knowledge of a close other and of my self is a source of pleasure. At a basic level, it could be interpreted as the fulfillment of a human need for what Nathaniel Branden (1993) has called “psychological visibility.” It could be that but also more.

According to Branden, there is a special pleasure we derive from contemplating something alive, even just a plant: “I thought of the motive of people who, in the most impoverished conditions plant flowers in boxes on their windshields – for the pleasure of watching something grow. Apparently, observing successful life is of value to human beings” (1993: 65). There is an even greater pleasure we derive, he argues, from “interacting and communicating with a living consciousness” (p. 66) like, say, playing with a dog. Lying under this pleasure is what Branden calls “the Muttnik’s principle” (named after his pet) or “the Principle of Psychological visibility”: “Human beings desire and need the experience of self-awareness that results from perceiving the self as an objective existent, and they are able to achieve this experience through interaction with the consciousness of

other living beings” (p. 72). The pleasure will be highest, he says, within friendship and love, because in those relationships we admire and care for the person with whom we are involved (p. 71).

Friendship is a source of deep pleasure not only because we become visible to someone we value, but also because it is pleasurable to see whom we value. Branden claims that contemplating all forms of life is a metaphysical experience that tells us successful life is possible and, because of that, the sight of another person is even more pleasurable:

The success and achievements of those around us, in their own persons and in their work, can provide fuel and inspiration for our efforts and strivings. Perhaps this is one of the greatest gifts human beings can offer one another. A greater gift than charity, a greater gift than any explicit teaching or any words of advice –the sight of happiness, achievement, success, fulfillment. (p. 66)

I think the pleasure could come partially from what Branden describes as the fulfillment of the psychological need for visibility, but I think there is more to it than that. It is clear that Branden is explaining what Aristotle might be saying when he defines a friend as another self. Branden even says friends are mirrors. But in Aristotelian terms friends also give us the possibility to see virtuous actions. It is not just that my friend reflects my-self in a certain sense. The pleasure I experience by engaging in friendship comes also from seeing my friend in herself and her way of seeing, living, and acting in the world.

And if we have the honor of having a character friendship, such a relationship will give us both the pleasure of witnessing virtuous actions. Moreover, it seems to me that until now we have only discussed the pleasure we experience as a result of the special knowledge we attain in friendship. That is, the pleasure we experience by contemplating my self, the other self, and virtuous actions. But we also experience pleasure from the emotions we foster when engaged in virtue and from the sustained practice friendship facilitates. I will talk about those emotions and such practice in the next two sections.

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

Appropriate motivation is a *sine qua non* condition for virtue. The virtuous agent not only must *know* what she is doing but also *want* to do it. Such motivation must precede actions, accompany and follow them in order to count as virtuous, because "...virtue of character is about pleasures and pains" (1104b9), and how we are affected by them in the right way (1104b28-9). I will argue here that the desire to be a good friend motivates us to seek the best ways to become one.¹⁰⁷ Among the first requirements to be a good friend is to be

¹⁰⁷ I need to highlight here an important difference with the view I am trying to complement. Whereas traditional theories about virtue cultivation focus on vertical

genuinely worried about the friend's well-being for her own sake.

Close relationships like friendship help us to develop morally relevant emotions for virtue, such as love, admiration, shame, hope, and trust.

2.3.1 *Love or philia*

"...loving is the virtue of friends"
Aristotle (NE 1156b1).

*"Love, furthermore, eases the difficult task of the educator:
for gratitude and affection enhance the forcefulness of the parental command... (NE
1180b3-7).*

*Take intimacy and felt love away and you have, Aristotle concludes, only a 'watery'
sort of concern all round, without the power to mold or transform a soul".*
M. Nussbaum (1986: 362).

At the beginning of Chapter I, I claimed that when Aristotle talks of *philia* he could be thinking of a wide variety of affective relationships we have with others, such as family members, romantic partners, and friends. Nevertheless, I stated that I will be restricting the application of the term just to friends in the regular sense we use it – to designate non-family members - because I think Aristotle himself ended up talking about a sort of relationship that is in certain sense chosen. I will

relationships in which the virtue learner is motivated by an emotion that could be translated as: "I want to be *like* her" (the emotion of admiration, following L. Zagzebski 2017), my emphasis is on emotions that could be translated as: "I want to be *with* her." That is so because my focus here is mainly on horizontal relationships.

do so also because translating *philia* as *friendship* highlights the contingency which is characteristic of the sort of relationship we establish with friends, which makes it fragile and, at the same time, powerful.

This does not mean family members cannot be character friends nor that my thesis is grounded on the view of friendship as an essentially unstable relationship that could easily end while the parts remain in deep ways unchanged. Family members can cultivate good friendships, but that would be a matter of their choice, and it will make the friendship relationship as fragile as a normal friendship is. In the same way, friends' lives are interwoven in many and important senses by virtue of their choice and mutual commitment to keep cultivating the relationship. Nevertheless, the special character of it is chosen, and that makes it fragile but powerful. This contingency makes friendship an important source of vulnerability for human good (see Nussbaum, 1986: 343-500).¹⁰⁸ But it also makes of friendship a privileged source of emotional value. It is because we are attached to our friend in the way we are that we care for her. The strong affective element of

¹⁰⁸ Like she points out, this vulnerability is what makes the human good *human*. Simply put, only gods are not vulnerable. Aristotle, contrary to Plato, embraces human condition of neediness (p. 357).

friendship is what keeps friends together and makes possible a shared history.

In this way, it is important to have in mind here that 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; Nussbaum, 1986). I am referring 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, 1986,¹⁰⁹ 1980, 1979; Badhwar 1987, 1993) 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 (Friedman, 1989,1993; Blum, 1986; Murdoch, 1970). Love, nevertheless, seems to be an important element in

¹⁰⁹According to Nussbaum: “The two strongest sources of human motivation, he [Aristotle] tells us in Book II of the Politics, in criticism of Plato, are the idea that something is your own and the idea that it is the only one you have (1262b22ff., EN 1180a3ff). The intensity of concern that binds parents and children in the enterprise of moral education cannot simply be replaced by a communal system... for it is the thought that it is your own child, not someone else’s, together with the thought that you are unique and irreplaceable for that child and that child for you, that’s most keenly spurs the parent to work and care for the education of the child, the child to work and care for the parent.” (Nussbaum, 1986: 362).

character development.¹¹⁰ 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 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.¹¹¹ During this period, she claims, respect

¹¹⁰ In EN x.9, Aristotle claims that parental training has the power of responding with accuracy to the individuality of the child. Such power is constituted by two elements: closeness and affective involvement (Nussbaum, 1986: 362).

¹¹¹ Sherman claims that for Aristotle "...against Plato, the development and sustenance of virtuous character will be throughout a social and political process, and one which reserves a primary role for the family. For on Aristotle's view, we become moral agents in response to and through the help of others whom we deeply care about and whose lives intertwine with our own. Through the early attachments and affections of *philia* we are made ready for the sorts of friendships and associations which will sustain the good life" (Sherman, 1982: 53).

and shame are the main motivational forces (*ibid.*, pp. 77-88). Aristotle claims that after this period, *paideia*¹¹² 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*¹¹³ for ancient Greeks, most of the time she uses it to refer to love towards family members, more specifically the parents and the role they play as models for children's character development. In other places (1991, 1987) where she specifically talks of friendship as the perfect arena for cultivating virtue, she does so only in passing.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Paideia* was the Greek term for children's formation, which included the transmission of both technical and moral knowledge.

¹¹³ *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).

¹¹⁴ Some of those comments: "...identificatory emotions: emulation, respect, love. The limited point now is that attachment emotions, characteristic of love or friendship, create new objects of care or fear for us. This role of emotions will have crucial importance in moral development, and in learning in general. We learn best from those with whom we can identify and from those whom we value positively. This underlies Aristotle's view that friendship (*philia*) is the central arena in which character development takes place" (N. Sherman (1999B: 41). And in a note to this, she says: "Aristotle himself (Poetics IV) emphasizes the importance of identification (or *mimesis*) as a learning method, and combines this in the books on friendship with the importance of an empathetic, responsive relationship as a context for learning." Although her (1987) is specifically about Aristotle's notion of character friendship, her concerns there are mainly about how this notion is related to his account of happiness.

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 having role models for virtue cultivation from late childhood to adulthood, even if rationality has fully emerged.

2.3.2. *Admiration*

Imitation, *mimesis*, seems to be connatural to human beings. Little children, as any mammal offspring, imitate others' behavior. This may be part of the reason why most virtue theories claim role models are fundamental in the process of cultivation of virtue. We admire someone and that moves us to want to emulate them.

Linda Zagzebski's (2017) theory explains this process well. She claims that by direct reference to exemplars we identify what a good person is (or should be), which counts as a reason to act, and moves us to emulate them. In her theory, the emotion of admiration is the main motor of moral improvement. It is like a natural faculty that in

general allows us to pick up exemplars of moral goodness, and moves us to want to be like them. In this sense, the process of teaching/learning virtue is prompted by exemplars (real and fictitious) where emotions, beliefs, and comprehension could be attained through them, although not always by emulation. Trying to emulate an exemplar, I could enact the emotion for compassion or courage, but I cannot immediately acquire the exemplar's beliefs about compassion or courage. Nevertheless, my admiration for her could include epistemic admiration and count as evidence in favor of the truth of those beliefs. In the same way, this admiration could help me gain understanding of different moral situations. By merely emulating, however, we do not gain understanding. Zagzebski claims we do not acquire the ability to see the connection among beliefs and among motives and acts by emulating an exemplar, and says that with another's help we develop it by ourselves; but she does not seem to have in mind friendship here.

I basically agree with her 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 (1987, 1999), character friends help us cultivate virtue, but only insofar as friends are also taken to be models to emulate. In Sherman's words:

The supposition is that character friends will realize to a different degree (and in a different manner) particular virtues. Each is inspired to develop himself more completely as he sees admirable qualities, not fully realized in himself, manifest in another whom he esteems. Remarks Aristotle makes about the notion of emulation in the *Rhetoric* are pertinent here. Emulation, he says, is felt most intensely 'before those whose nature is like our own and who have good things that are highly valued and are possible for us to achieve' (1388a31–2). Character friends, as extended yet different selves, are eminently suited as models to be emulated. (1999: p. 134).

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 propagates emotions of crucial importance for the cultivation of virtue. Put simply, the value of character friendship shows that there is more to the process of virtue cultivation than the emotion of admiration.¹¹⁵

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

*"...we are more ashamed in front of those
who are always present and who attend to us, for in both cases eyes
are upon us"*
Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, 1384a 33-34).

¹¹⁵ Another interesting variation of this thesis is suggested by Benjamin Polansky (2014) where he claims that admiration does not necessarily drive us to want to *be like* the exemplar, 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 claims admiration not always conduces to emulation.

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 Kristjjan Kristjánsson (2014) I contend shame is an important emotion that could prompt moral learners, especially from early adolescence to adulthood. In particular, I contend that some of the shame that a character friend might make us experience moves us toward our better selves.

With Kristjánsson (2010), I think “emotions are essential to the creation and sustenance of selfhood” (p. 75). In order to better understand the self, Kristjánsson opposes what he calls the “‘dominant’ self-paradigm,” which is mainly anti-realist and cognitive-based, and proposes his “‘alternative’ *self-paradigm*,” which is in certain sense cognitive but mostly emotion-based and realist (p. 4). According to him, there are at least three categories of self-relevant emotions: self-constituting (that define who we are), self-comparative (involve the self as a reference point for comparisons with expectations), and self-conscious emotions: “Those emotions not only involve *consciousness of the self*; they are – to use the language of

intentionality - *about* the self. The self is, in other words, their direct attentional and intentional object: The self is not only *the* stage; it is *on* stage” (p. 77). Those self-conscious emotions could be of self-enhancement or self-diminution, and could or could not attribute responsibility to the self, and so we will have:

Pride (pleasurable self-enhancement feeling relating to a positive outcome for which I am responsible, such as passing a difficult exam), *self-satisfaction* (pleasurable self-enhancement feeling relating to a positive outcome for which I am not responsible, such as being born handsome), *shame* (painful self-diminution feeling relating to a negative outcome for which I am responsible, such as failing an exam), and *self-disappointment* (painful self-diminution feeling relating to an outcome for which I am not responsible, such as being born ugly). (K. Kristjánsson, 2010: 84).

Through these self-conscious emotions we are reviewing and evaluating ourselves constantly. That is why Kristjánsson highlights the moral role of the self-conscious emotions which, in Hume’s words, “begets in noble creatures, a certain reverence for themselves, as well as others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue” (1972, p. 276). According to K. Kristjánsson, this position is supported by current emotion theory (Tracy & Robins, 2007).

I interpret all this as a reason to think that shame is a valuable and necessary emotion for our moral development, for the cultivation of virtue during adolescence, and then for the cultivation and sustainment of virtue during our adult lives. This idea seems to be in frank opposition to a pervasive thesis according to which shame is just

proper of immature individuals and societies.¹¹⁶ Shame, on such a thesis, is a negative emotion experienced as a sort of fear for the sight of the other - it is just the result of the other internalized, whereas guilt is a more 'mature' emotion, proper of mature individuals or societies.

In his essay on shame, Kristjánsson (2014) exposes contrasting interpretations of the emotion of shame, according to the moral value assigned to it. In one hand, there is the claim that shame should be avoided because it is morally 'ugly', which Kristjánsson calls the 'orthodox' view, and on the other hand there is the interpretation that defends the moral value of shame, which he calls 'heterodox'. The heterodox interpretation corresponds to ancient philosophy, especially Aristotelian, and the orthodox to contemporary social psychology, psychological anthropology, educational psychology. He highlights how persistent and pervasive the intent of avoidance of shame in our contemporary milieu has been.

For Aristotle, on the contrary, shame seems to be 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, Aristotle claims they have positive moral value in that they prompt cultivation of virtue. Aristotle defines shame as "...a

¹¹⁶ See Ruth Benedict (1946) and E. R. Dodds (1951). For a response, see Bernard Williams (1993).

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, on a modern interpretation it is a "negative" emotion. 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 actually holds the so-called orthodox 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 Marlene 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 suggests 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 me, 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). A story of my teenage daughter could be illustrative at this point. After four and a half years of living in the USA she has made many new friends here. Three Halloweens ago she was with some of them who were smoking marijuana and she was offered to smoke. She rejected the offer, and few days later she told me the story. I was concerned by what her friends were doing but at the same time I felt pride for her response, so I spoke to her about that. After several minutes the scene was still in my head and I could not help but ask her why she said “no.” I expected many different answers. For instance, that since they were in a park they could be caught by the police, or since I was going to pick her up later I might smell it or notice it, and that I was going to be mad, ground her, and tell her father and the rest of the family, and so on. Her answer surprised me. She said: “I thought about my friends in Colombia, about what they would say if they knew I smoked weed.” The chances that they would find out about this episode were exceedingly low, whereas all the other possible reasons were much more likely, but the image of her friends was what prevented her from smoking. Some would say that the possible consequences of being caught by the police or her parents could have been really bad for her and that these considerations should have prevented her from accepting to smoke.

But it seems she was not refrained by the thought of a possible punishment, or at least not one in the traditional sense.

According to Williams (1993), because contemporary 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. 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. (p. 248-9)

In the same vein, Friedman (1989) claims friends guide us or inspire us, because "When we don't know *what* to believe, we can try to determine *who* to believe" (p. 9). Trusted friends, she says,

stimulate our moral transformation (p. 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.

2. 4. Character friendship as a special praxis. Collaborative interactions and dialogues

According to T. Irwin (1999), Aristotle uses *praxis* or action in three different senses: (1) along with the cognate verb *prattein*, for all intentional actions (animals and children would be capable of action in this sense). (2) Confined to rational action on a decision (animals and children won't be capable of action in this sense). (3) Most strictly "...confined to rational action which is its own end, and is not done exclusively for the sake of some end beyond it. It aims at 'doing well' (or 'acting well', *eupraxia*), for itself... It is a complete activity" (T. Irwin, 1999: 315). Moreover, Irwin claims complete activity in Aristotelian terms is also actualization (*energeia*) of capacities without the loss of those capacities. This is contrasted with incomplete activity,

where the activity implies the loss of the capacity. Seeing or living, Irwin says, would be an example of complete activity, whereas house-building is an instance of incomplete activity. You do not lose the capacity to see by seeing, nor do you lose the capacity to live by living. But you lose the capacity to build a house after you build a house (p. 315).¹¹⁷

I think character friendship is *praxis* or activity in this most complete sense, because the people who are engaged in it have no further end, and because by being engaged in such a way they actualize their capacities without losing them. This is one of the elements that better distinguishes my view from the traditional theory about virtue cultivation: my view gives a central place to sustained activity or *praxis* with another. In contrast with theories focused on

¹¹⁷ See McIntyre's (1981) conception of the notion of practice, where he defines it as "Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions to the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended" (MacIntyre 1985: 187). This definition of practice adds to the third definition proposed by Irwin a social component. In that sense, practice or "complete activity" would entail also goods internal to the practice within a cooperative activity. For while Irwin considers "seeing" as a practice in the third sense, McIntyre would not. "Living," on the other hand, seems to count for both of them. I think McIntyre's characterization of practice could be more useful for my suggestion of thinking of friendship as a special human practice.

vertical relationships in which the learner identifies models to emulate without even necessarily having direct contact and engagement with them, my view focuses on horizontal relationships and emphasizes the importance of close interaction with someone for virtue cultivation. A central element of my thesis is the idea that a collaborative relationship is a privileged arena for cultivation of virtue throughout life, and I contend that this collaborative or cooperative dimension of character friendship is expressed both through actions and through dialogue.

First, the collaborative, cooperative dimension of character friendship is expressed in actions mainly through mutual care and attentive responsiveness in the friends' interactions. When doing a favor for each other, for instance, good friends respond adequately, at the needed time, in the needed fashion, and do it in a way that reflects care and takes care of their friend's real needs. 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 cultivation of virtue because, as we know, having the right motivations is fundamental to acting 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 consists in, provides the friends with a sort of practice that is fundamental for cultivating virtue. As Zena Hitz claims, one of the ways in which friends help in the process of virtue cultivation is by "...improving and augmenting virtuous activity" (Hitz, 2011: 13, note 44). Although following Exemplarist Moral Theory (Zagzebski, 2017) 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 opportunity 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 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 of 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.¹¹⁸ 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.

We have seen that while character friends need not be similar in many aspects, 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.

¹¹⁸ I will explain more the notion of dialogue involved in my view in Chapter IV.

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 do. 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.

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 friends' 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 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 friendship¹¹⁹. But that is a highly implausible view¹²⁰. I have shown

¹¹⁹ I owe this analysis to Benjamin Polansky.

¹²⁰It is also very indirect. Emulating doesn't directly cause the right emotions, so in emulating her friend, she is actually less virtuous than when she is simply helping her friend

how much a moral learner might derive from her character friend and from 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 the emotion of admiration and on emulation in the role model approach 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 *qua* role model cannot provide.¹²¹ But character friendship 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.

Before finishing this chapter I want to highlight another important difference between what I propose and extent theories about the value of friendship for moral growth and virtue cultivation. Although I have already mentioned there is not much work done in this direction, there

because she cares for her (because when she is helping her friend, her emotions are properly aligned). I thank Seth Robertson for this comment.

¹²¹ 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. I will expand more on this idea in the next chapter.

are a few authors who consider friendship an important school for virtue. However, they are almost exclusively focused in the cognitive value of the relationship. Brewer (2005), for instance, focuses on the Aristotelian idea that friends allow us to contemplate human excellence (p. 724). He claims:

In elaborating this view, I believe myself to be adhering closely to Aristotle's claim that the proper object of personal love (whether self-love or love of another) is the person's *nous*—that is, the intelligence or understanding by which the person grasps the *arche* or substantive origins of proper thought in any area of inquiry (p. 737).

Kristjánsson (2015), on the other hand, considers that the value of character friendship derives mainly from the dialogue that fosters and is fostered within it. He claims such a dialogue helps us to cultivate virtue, because through it we examine and refine our reasons. I agree with Brewer and with Kristjánsson in that contemplating human excellence and engaging in dialogue constitute an important part of the value of friendship for virtue cultivation, but this is just part of the story. Friendship moves us to our better selves not only in virtue of its cognitive value but also because of its emotional value. I hope I have succeeded in showing why.

The way we conceive and value our friends and our relationships with them 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. This cultivation starts in early childhood with the help of parents, teachers, and tutors, and in this stage admiration and emulation are fundamental. But I suggest that from late childhood to adolescence and beyond, the cultivation of the type of motivation needed to act virtuously is, in fact, mostly driven by character friendship.

Since at this point my thesis is developmental, in the next chapter I will explore some literature from psychology to see if there is some empirical evidence that could support it. To be clear, I am not claiming Aristotle drew a developmental account of the cultivation of virtue, but I think that from his works we can derive some clues to construct a good developmental theory about how could we become virtuous. Again, I think character friendships play a fundamental role in this process.

Chapter IV. Friendship, virtue, and education: empirical support and practical implications

In chapter I, I examined different answers to the question of whether virtue can be taught. I reviewed Plato and Aristotle's answers to this question and concluded that after some clarification of the concepts involved in the notion of *teaching virtue*, it is possible to interpret both as thinking that virtue can be taught. Then I reviewed three neo-Aristotelian theories that consider this question. Julia Annas (2011) talks of learning virtue as learning a practical skill, Rosalind Hursthouse (2001) speaks of learning virtue by educating our emotions, and Linda Zagzebski (2010 and 2017) talks of cultivating virtue through the emotion of admiration. I concluded that chapter claiming that, although these theories could be partially correct, they are incomplete because they focus too much on the idea of a model who directs the process of virtue cultivation and is conceived of as superior to the learner in several relevant senses. So I called attention to the Aristotelian notion of character friendship as a possible antidote to this concern.

In chapter II I explored some views about friendship and then I summarized the notion of "character friend" (or "good friend") as I understand it. Friendship is understood as a close relationship

characterized by mutual appreciation, mutual well-wishing, and mutual acknowledgement of that appreciation and well-wishing. In character friendship such fondness between the friends is grounded in their mutual appreciation of their good characters, and their mutual aspiration and pursuit of the good life in the Aristotelian sense.

In chapter III I explained why I think qualified friendship is fundamental for learning and cultivating virtue. I said character friendship is a unique experience in which we gain a special kind of knowledge and foster certain emotions that facilitate a *praxis* central for virtue cultivation. Such a *praxis* is characterized by collaborative interactions and dialogues.

In this chapter I have two main goals: (i) to explore some practical evidence that seems to support the thesis that character friends are fundamental for virtue cultivation, and (ii) to examine some practical implications of this thesis, specially with respect to character education.

Recall that since my general aim is not exegetical, I do not try to prove that in fact Aristotle held the thesis that character friendship is fundamental for the cultivation of virtue. Rather, I have tried to show that my interpretation makes sense within an Aristotelian framework, and in this chapter I attempt to show that it could also be true and useful. Examining some results from developmental and social

psychology, I hope to show that my thesis seems to be supported by some findings, and could be useful if applied to better conceptualize interactions with and among moral learners in different stages of their lives besides early childhood.

As the role modelling approach claims, role models are fundamental in childhood and continue having influence throughout our lives. But, from early adolescence to adulthood, friendship is at least equally important. The contrast here is with the type of relationship that is usually considered as the one that motivates and inculcates virtue cultivation. Whereas contemporary theories about cultivation of virtue focus on a vertical relationship in which moral learners are “guided” by models who are usually their superiors (parents, teachers, mentors), I argue that the complete process of virtue cultivation requires also horizontal relationships.

My focus is on the case of character friendship, and on the idea that in a developmental account that considers adolescents and adults as moral learners, good friends are either as important as models, or are models themselves, although they are not necessarily seen as moral superiors. That is so because, if we agree with Sherman (1982) that emotional attachments as well as the active cultivation of rational and deliberative capacities play a fundamental role in moral development and the cultivation of virtue, good friendships are a

natural and appropriate arena for the cultivation of virtue beyond the family and before the public life.

1. Some empirical evidence

“Carol Gilligan suggested that children’s relationships may provide critical evidence ‘about both the promise of moral wisdom and the danger of lost moral insight’: it is in their friendships that the promise of moral wisdom is especially clear”.

Judy Dunn (2004: 43).

There is abundant empirical support for the claim that friendship is fundamental for human well-being.¹²² There is also some empirical evidence that shows human beings distinguish among different kinds of friendships.¹²³ Even more related to the interests of this dissertation, there is some empirical evidence according to which people from childhood to adulthood give descriptions of their friendships that seem to fit Aristotle’s taxonomy of types of friendship

¹²² Attachment theory (J. Bowlby, 1969/1982) is an approach that in general terms supports this idea, but there are more specific approaches too. These approaches range from instrumental versions of friendship (P. DeScioli and R. Kurzban: 2009; M. Gifford-Smitha, C. A. Brownellb, 2002) to versions that consider friendship as a constitutive good (B. Fowers, 2015; Roelfs, Yogev, 2013). Particularly in what has to do with friendship and well-being for children and adolescents, see Demir, M. & Davidson, I. (2012); E. Vaquera and G. Kao (2007), B. L. Weimer et al. (2004).

¹²³ Besides differences overtly recognized by subjects, it is worth mentioning that there are also contextual differences in the concept of friendship not always recognized by the subjects involved, such as cultural interpretations of the notion of friendship (D. Narvaez, 2014; L. Krappmann, 1996), and differences marked by gender (Dunn, 2004), and ethnicity (E. Vaquera, G. Kao, 2008).

(Fowers, unpublished; Walker et al., 2016; Bukowski, Nappi, Hoza: 2001; Bukowski and Sippola, 1996). But is there some empirical evidence providing at least indirect support for my claim that character friendship is necessary for the cultivation of virtue, especially from early adolescence onward?

In order to answer this question, let's start by unwrapping some of its basic assumptions. First of all, at the base of the thesis is the idea that friendship in general (without qualification) is fundamental for moral development. Second, it assumes that the best or most complete kind of friendship is (at least) possible among early adolescents (9-13 years approximately). Do we have empirical evidence for these assumptions?

I would like to highlight here some of the difficulties in dealing with these issues. Although there has been abundant empirical research on friendship, it has mostly focused on how friendship impacts the well-being of adults. On the other hand, studies in developmental psychology have been mainly focused on young children, and those studies have worked mostly on parents/children relationships rather than on peers' relationships, and even more rarely on the sort of close interpersonal relationship that friendship (especially character friendship) is. This means there is relatively scarce empirical research on adolescent friendships, and most of

those studies focus on the bad influences of peers and friends for adolescents (Simona C. S. et al., 2014; and Engels, Kerr, Stattin, 2007). There is, nevertheless, some valuable work in the same direction of my thesis, although not always focused on early adolescence. I will have to extrapolate from some findings in developmental psychology focused on the period of mid-to-late childhood to derive indirect support for my thesis.

Judy Dunn's (2004) work on children's friendships, for instance, is a good start to find some empirical evidence for the first issue, i.e., the idea that friendship is fundamental for moral development.¹²⁴ She starts by describing a scene that happens in a nursery school in Pennsylvania, where she and her team work are researching on friendship. In it, two four-year-olds, Harry and Joe, embark in a game in which they pretend to be pirates searching for a treasure. Then, Dunn points out that their joint adventure or enterprise, in which they share a narrative, "...is so unlike what happens with their parents, with the other children in the nursery, or with Harry's (for the most part despised) younger sister" (p. 1). She claims such an adventure depends on the children's coordination of ideas and imagination, it is

¹²⁴ Another valuable work in this direction is Bukowski et al. (1996).

a considerable intellectual task that is the beginning of intimacy, and it is emotionally valuable for both children.

Dunn has good reasons to call such a relationship *friendship*: it is characterized by companionship, reciprocity or mutuality of expressed affection, and it is voluntary (p. 2). The conditions for that sort of relationship seem to start developing early in life,¹²⁵ and they evolve over time.¹²⁶ And even more important for our quest, she claims that what makes those relationships special is that they give to the children involved a sort of understanding of one another and an emotional engagement to each other that positively impacts their cognitive and emotional development (p.p. 1-11), and that they are different from other relationships. She remarks:

Is the developmental story that emerges simply an account of growing social skills? No. There is an important distinction between social skills, and friendship as an intimate bond. Social skills can be used for self-promotion and gaining self-interest goals, or to

¹²⁵ The youngest age Dunn reports is 15 months old. She claims empirical observations have shown that toddlers and preschoolers are capable of maintaining close and lasting relationships characterized by caring and supportive behavior (p. 33).

¹²⁶ She places the beginnings of intimacy in toddlers and preschoolers, when they start sharing cooperative games and what she calls “pretend” (p. 30), but also when they show incipient instances of self-disclosure (p. 35). Then, she claims that if those relationships have the opportunity to continue, at around four-years-old children show more mutual caring and affection (p. 31), and early instances of conciliation and compromise (p. 37), where “...children were significantly more likely to use reasoning that took account of the other’s person point of view or feelings that when they were in conflict with their siblings” (p. 38). While children move through the school years, loyalty, self-disclosure and trust become more important in friendship (p. 42), and their shared make-believe or “pretend” starts decaying at around seven-years-old (p. 46).

cooperate with, care for, and support another; they can be used to win arguments and get your own way, or to solve disagreements in the interests of the other, or of both. Friendship is indeed a forum for developing social skills and understanding of another, but is much more. (p. 3)

One of the elements Dunn mentions as fundamental for children's moral development that is facilitated by friendships is other-oriented reasoning. According to her, researchers have found that at the early age of two, children behave in different ways with parents, siblings, and friends. Part of the difference has to do with the fact that there is more other-oriented reasoning in children's actions with friends (p. 38), which Dunn attributes to a certain "equality of power" (p. 38). She explains that:

... one general conclusion from the pattern of results is that individual differences in mind-reading and emotion understanding carry wide implications for children's social and moral lives. And friendship, we have seen, may well have a special place in the development of this understanding. (p. 61)

According to Dunn, then, friendship may play a unique role in moral development due to the mind-reading and emotion understanding that the equality in power between friends entails. Interestingly, Piaget (1950) had already talked about the centrality of what Dunn calls *equality of power* in moral development:

...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.* (p. 409, my emphasis)

This remark may support my idea that emulation of role models is insufficient for the cultivation of virtue through a whole life. In the case of friendship, coordination with the equal, not just conformation to the role model image is what drives the moral and intellectual growth of the friends (Hartup, 1996: 218).¹²⁷ This provides some support for the first assumption in my thesis, according to which friendship as such is fundamental for moral development. I assume that what Dunn claims about the importance of friendship for moral development in children would apply for moral development in later stages of life.

Now let's examine the second assumption. It states that the best or most complete kind of friendship is possible among early adolescents. Is there empirical evidence for this assumption? Is it possible that early adolescents know what a good friend is? In other words, are they capable of virtue or character friendship in the Aristotelian sense?¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Vygotsky's theory (1981) and George Herbert Mead (1934, 1938) also support this idea.

¹²⁸ Recall Aristotle claims virtue friendship is between virtuous people (1156b7-33). This could make someone think that, according to him, people who are still in the

It seems to me that the evidence just mentioned (Dunn, 2004) shows children know what good friendship requires. Someone could argue, nevertheless, that this does not necessarily imply children are capable of virtue or character friendship in the Aristotelian sense. Children, they could claim, have not yet developed something that could be called “character”, and the notion of being engaged in virtue or character friendship requires a sort of reasoning little children are not able to perform (this line of reasoning will naturally follow from Kohlbergian approaches, for instance¹²⁹).

David Walker, Randall Curren, and Chantel Jones (2016) challenge these kinds of approaches in their theoretical and empirical work. They conducted 14 focus-group interviews with children aged nine and ten, as part of broader research on character cultivation in schools across the United Kingdom. Although initially the researches

process of character formation (not yet virtuous) are not capable of engaging in character friendships. As a consequence, they could say that since adolescents are in such a process they cannot have character friendships in the Aristotelian sense. But recall also that we have been following Cooper (1980) in his interpretation of Aristotle as allowing not fully virtuous people the possibility to engage in what Cooper proposes to call *character friendship*, instead of *virtue friendship*. Moreover, despite this and other Aristotelian remarks (1156a32-1156b6) that seem to lead to think children cannot be or have character friends, K. Kristjánsson (2007) argues “there are sound Aristotelian reasons for holding that parents and their children are capable of true character friendship with one another” (115). The possibility I consider here is whether early adolescents can be character friends, and since my project is not purely exegetical, even if Aristotle did not think it was possible, I do.

¹²⁹ See Kohlberg (1958).

were not focused specifically on friendship, children's answers to questions about the qualities they admired or expected in people made them focus on the categories used by the children to describe their friends. Surprisingly for the authors, they found evidence suggesting that "...at least some pre-adolescent children value and exhibit virtues of character important to friendship quality." (p. 2):

We interpret the data [...] as evidence that by age ten some children will have: (1) learned – perhaps largely through their experience of friendship – that a variety of moral virtues are desirable in friends, and (2) adopted aspirations to exhibit those virtues of friendship themselves. The limitations of this study do not enable us to estimate the extent to which these aspirations are reflected in the acquisition and consistent expression of those virtues, but we interpret the data as indicating the possession of moral motivation focused on the wellbeing of others, as well as motivation to engage in activities of friendship that would be consistent with and develop the relevant virtues (p. 3).

Contrary to what the tradition¹³⁰ says about children's capacity for conceiving what Walker et al. call "*eudaimonic* friendship", they found that "In describing qualities of a good friend, the language of virtue seemed to come naturally to many of the children" (p. 11). They cite some other research which supports the claim that pre-adolescent children value their friends for their good qualities and seek the wellbeing of the other for the other's sake (Bigelow, 1977; Damon, 1977;

¹³⁰ Mainly inspired by Aristotle (NE) and Kohlberg (1958).

Sullivan, 1953). They claim, nevertheless, that the evidence is not yet decisive and more research is needed (p. 9).

How does this evidence connect with my thesis that character friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation? Walker et al. suggest friends-coaching is a distinct and valuable form of active habituation.

In their words:

Habituation of this kind would have three distinctive features: (1) a child learning to be a good friend would be coached by peer-friends, who admonish and advise on the basis of their own developing understanding of how friends should treat each other; (2) the importance of the friends and friendships to the child may be an unusually direct source of aspiration to self-improvement (Dunn, 2006, pp. 5–7, 38–40, 42–44); (3) the forms of goodness or virtue required of friends seem to have a natural basis that makes them identifiable (if not necessarily nameable) to children in the course of their experience with friendship. (p. 8).

Both Dunn's and Walker et al.'s works show friends are important for our moral development from an early age, and this importance could increase over time.¹³¹ They also suggest that the kind of experience that friendship is and facilitates is, in a way, unique.

In the same vein, Willard W. Hartup (1996) reports some studies that suggest: (a) friends know one another better than nonfriends (Lad & Emerson, 1984); (b) friends and nonfriends have different expectations of one another; specifically, friends expect

¹³¹ For more on this, see Bukowski et al. (1996), and works exploring the relationship between friendship and prosocial behavior, such as C. M. Barry and Wentzel (2006).

reciprocity, commitment, and equality (Bigelow, 1977; Rotenberg & Pilipenko, 1983-1984; Collins & Repinski, 1994; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987); (c) friends may provide one another with affective contexts that facilitate problem solving (Schwartz, 1972); and (d) “friends are more motivated than nonfriends to maintain contact with one another and to behave in ways that continue their interaction” (Hartup, 1996: 228) (Hinde et al. 1985). Hartup concludes:

The evidence suggests that cooperation between friends differs from cooperation between nonfriends. Empirical studies are not numerous but friends, as compared with nonfriends, are more talkative, mutually oriented, task-oriented, affectively expressive (positively), affirmative as well as argumentative, and equitable in managing conflicts... (p. 232-233)

It seems to me this connects with my thesis that some of the main elements that drive virtue cultivation between friends are the sort of special knowledge they gain by engaging in the relationship, as well as their mutual admiration, love, hope, and trust for each other. In this way, there is some evidence to conclude that (i) friendship in general is fundamental for moral development, and (ii) children are capable of character friendships. Why do I claim (iii) *character* friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation, and (iv) is so especially from early adolescence onward?

I will start by answering (iv) first. I want to make clear that my thesis does not imply role models cease being important for

adolescents' and adults' virtue cultivation, nor that friendship is unimportant for very young children's virtue cultivation. Rather, the thesis is based on what I consider to be part of the development of the human being's moral and social self.¹³² According to Nancy Snow and Darcia Narvaez (retrieved from <http://smvproject.com/about/overview/>), three distinct approaches explain the development of the moral self in early life: the "Affective Core," the "Trait Dispositional," and the "Conscience" approach. In their words:

The third approach, pioneered by Kochanska (1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 2002a, 2002b), considers conscience as an inner-guidance system responsible for norm-compatible internalized conduct (rule-compliance without surveillance) and moral emotions (empathy). Individual differences in conscience are traced to two sources: biologically prepared temperament and socialization experiences in early caregiving relationships. In Kochanska's model, emerging morality begins with the quality of parent child attachment. A strong mutually responsive orientation (MRO) to caregivers orients the child to be receptive to parental influence. The MRO is characterized by shared positive affect, mutually coordinated enjoyable routines, and a cooperative interpersonal orientation marked by a joint willingness to initiate and reciprocate relational overtures. Within the context of an MRO the child displays committed compliance to the norms and values of caregivers, which motivates moral internalization and the work of conscience. It should be noted that Kochanska has found multiple pathways to conscience (Kochanska et al., 2010). (<http://smvproject.com/about/overview/>).

¹³² For more on the notion of the self, see C. Sedikides et al. (2007) and K. Kristjánsson (2010).

There is not much said here about how the moral self of the adolescent develops, but I think close relationships with peers play a fundamental role in a similar way that relationships with parents do. Specifically, the sort of attachment between good friends, their responsiveness or lack of it, and the richness of the content of their interactions determine a great part of their moral development. During adolescence, there is a sort of emotional and cognitive switch away from parents, teachers, and other authority figures to peers,¹³³ and the quality of the relationships established with good friends contributes a great deal to the virtue cultivation of the people involved.¹³⁴

¹³³ For some developmental evidence in this regard, see Hart and Carlo (2005), Eisenberg (2005), and Ch. L. Carmichael et al. (2007), where they claim: "Because self-knowledge is most malleable in early life, early caregivers (usually parents) are particularly influential in shaping self-knowledge about almost every domain of human activity (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000). Later in life parental influence diminishes, whereas others begin to play a more significant role. Peers, siblings, friends, and mentors acquire importance during childhood and adolescence (Harter, 1999), and romantic partners become influential, often singularly so, during adulthood" (p. 289-290). See also L. Steinberg and S. B. Silverberg (1986), who from a study with 865 10-16 years-old concluded that "...the transition from childhood into adolescence is marked more by a trading of dependency on parents for dependency on peers, rather than straight forward and unidimensional growth in autonomy" (p. 841).

¹³⁴ On how an appropriate integration of the ideal self-concept to the actual self-concept among adolescents influences prosocial behavior, see Hart and Fegley (1995). They claim the data "...suggests that the care exemplars, in comparison to the comparisons, are more likely to identify their actual selves with their ideal selves and with their parents. In contrast, the comparison adolescents were more likely than the care exemplars to have actual selves that incorporate the self-with-best friend, the self-expected-by-the-best-friend, and the representation of the best friend" (p. 1356). This seems to go against my thesis, but in defense of it I must say they do not provide a clear concept of what they call "best friend." In other words, they do not say if they mean *character friend*, or just *close friend*.

This brings me to question (iii) above –i.e., why do I claim *character* friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation, and not just friendship as such? Well, while I think all forms of friendship might be important for development in general,¹³⁵ I argue the good quality of the friendship is fundamental for virtue cultivation due to the very nature of virtue. Since virtue involves appropriate motivations to act, engaging in genuine close relationships characterized by mutual care and appreciation of the good qualities of each other’s character, and seeking the other’s good for her own sake is part and parcel of cultivating virtue with character friends. In addition to that, the friendship must be guided by the friends’ shared aspirations to virtue in order to cultivate their virtue.

Another reason for such a qualification of my thesis has to do with the fact that I recognize the power it gives to friendship during a period of time that is complex and fragile in human development: adolescence. My thesis is based on the acknowledgment of the positive power that friendship has for human beings’ development, but emphasizes the higher power character friendship has for virtue

¹³⁵ It is important to have in mind that although my thesis seems to be focused on what is called “moral development,” which tends to be equated with moral virtues, it also encompasses “cognitive development,” or what some might call intellectual virtues. In this regard, several studies have shown the positive impact that friends could have on academic achievements, for instance. See W. W. Hartup (1996), B. B. Brown et al. (1993), M. E. Gifford-Smitha and C. A. Brownellb (2002).

cultivation, specially from adolescence on. And while it could seem obvious to claim that good friendships help adolescents and adults become good persons,¹³⁶ both the vast literature trying to support the contrary thesis, according to which bad friendships could make us bad people (S. Caravita et al., 2014), and the fact that virtue theorists have underappreciated the role of friendship, shows us the need to work in the direction I am suggesting.

Finally, I want to make clear that I am fully aware of a possible difficulty with my thesis. Aristotle claimed we need virtue in order to have virtue friendship, which seems to imply virtue comes first and then the possibility of character friendship opens up. In a way, it makes sense to say it would be quite difficult for two people who have no good character qualities at all to establish a friendship based on the mutual appreciation of their good characters. Nevertheless, I am claiming we need character friendship to cultivate virtue. So, which comes first? Am I inverting the order of things here?

My thesis is intended to be a sort of developmental neo-Aristotelian approach to virtue cultivation, and I think the question about which comes first (virtue or virtue friendship) is misguided.

¹³⁶ Luckily, I am not alone in this. There have been some studies showing the good influences of positive friendships for adolescents (see, for instance, M. Demir and K. A. Urberg, 2004).

There is a developmental interdependence of character friendship and virtue. My hypothesis is that human beings require character friendship to cultivate virtue, especially from early adolescence onward, but also that character friendship requires at least some good character traits in order to be possible. That is why I chose the term “cultivation” of virtue instead of “acquisition.”

This seems to me in tune with the Aristotelian idea that full virtue requires natural virtue (1103a19-1103b3), also required within the traditional framework of virtue cultivation theory. In fact, role models would find it difficult to carry through their task of cultivating their apprentices’ virtues if there were not already a sort of natural disposition toward virtue in them.

2. Education. Some practical consequences of the thesis

“It would only make sense to play down friendship if we knew that almost all children were going to be determined loners or Nietzschean Übermenschen who might furthermore actually be harmed if they were educated in an atmosphere which fostered and celebrated the ties of friendship. As things are, it would be strange, to echo Aristotle, to bring up children in a way which did not acknowledge the very large place friendship has in the lives of most people.” Patricia White (1990: 86)

In this section I want to explore some of the possible practical consequences of the idea that character or complete friendship plays

a fundamental role in the cultivation of virtue. Since my hypothesis is that within a developmental account this thesis would apply mostly to late childhood and adolescence, I will primarily focus my attention to that period of time. As a consequence, I will explore some answers to questions about what parents/teachers, and schools *should* and *could* do.

2. 1. *Should we do something?*

I will start with the question whether parents/teachers *should* do something. I will explore to what extent it is paradoxical to argue that the cultivation of virtue requires more than relationships with superiors, and then say that because of that teachers and parents should do something at home and schools about adolescents' friendships. In other words, I want to explore the question whether we, as adults, should intervene. After attempting a positive answer to this question, my second concern will be what we *could* do.

The question about what adults should do seems to me related to the most general concern about the justification of moral education. It is what K. Kristjánsson (2007) calls "the paradox of moral education," an expression coined initially by R. S. Peters (1981) to "describe the inevitable need for and the apparently inevitable opposition between habituation and intellectual training" (Peters, cited

by K. Kristjánsson, 2007: 31). In modern terms, such a worry is expressed by saying that, although character education is needed, it cannot but be indoctrination, authoritarian, paternalistic, and anti-democratic (McLaughlin and Halstead, 1999). As K. Kristjánsson posits “is heteronomously formed autonomy [or authenticity] morally possible and justifiable?” (p. 32).

Now, related with my thesis, the question is whether adults’ intervention in children’s and adolescent’s cultivation of character is justified, having in mind that the goal of character cultivation is to form flourishing intellectual and moral agents. I agree with K. Kristjánsson’s solution to this paradox. He reminds us that the project of virtue cultivation in Aristotelian terms seems to be less worried about the need to fulfill the liberal agenda in which freedom and autonomy are the main goals, and more worried about how to develop in humans what is constitutive of and/or conducive to *eudaimonia* (p. 46). Here we have his Aristotelian answer:

We know from experience that however theoretically puzzling this may seem, habituated reason develops, if all is well, into critical reason, and heteronomously formed selfhood develops into a self that can make autonomous decisions [...] The moral and political justification of heteronomously formed autonomy will be found in the specially human substantive good of *eudaimonia*. If it happens that autonomy can be formed only in this way and that autonomy is conducive to *eudaimonia*, or even constitutive of it, then heteronomously formed autonomy is morally justified. This is, at any rate, how Aristotle morally justifies *phronesis*. (K. Kristjánsson, p. 47).

Following Kristjánsson, then, we could say that within an Aristotelian framework adult intervention is morally justified in virtue of the aim of helping learners to attain fulfillment as human beings, their *eudaimonia*. And this seems to be part of the core intuition behind the role modelling approach as I understand it here. My approach, nevertheless, focuses on horizontal relationships by claiming that character friendship - mostly established between equals - is also fundamental for virtue cultivation. Asking what we, adults (as superiors), should do about this thesis could seem even more paradoxical.

Let me re-state this once again. My thesis calls attention to the importance of character friendships for virtue cultivation, specially from adolescence onward, as a sort of complement to the role model approach. It does not entail that adult's intervention in children's moral development ceases to be necessary. And while I think my thesis has some empirical support since evidence seems to show that in general adolescents' attention is moving from authority figures to their peers, the task of guiding the process of virtue cultivation is still normative, and in this sense both good friends and good authority figures are

required.¹³⁷ As a consequence, I think that if adults could help children and adolescents in any way to engage in good friendships and maintain them, they should do it. This is why my next concern is what we *can* do.

Before moving to that concern, though, I need to address a more specific difficulty related to the question whether we should do something to help adolescents engage in character friendships. It has to do with the very concept of friendship and what an external intervention would mean. Almost every modern definition of friendship claims friends are bound together as a result of their will to be so.¹³⁸ Friendship is a voluntary association. Friends like each other, enjoy their time together, share values and goals, and look after each other's well-being because they appreciate each other for who they

¹³⁷ Moreover, evidence shows parents/adolescents relationships still have a big influence on peer affiliation and other issues among adolescents. According to B. B. Brown et al. (1993): "Data from a sample of 3,781 of high school students (ages 15-19) indicated that specific parenting practices (monitoring, encouragement of achievement, joint decision making) were significantly associated with specific adolescent behaviors (academic achievement, drug use, self-reliance), which in turn were significantly related to membership in common adolescent crowds (jocks, druggies, etc.)" (p. 467).

¹³⁸ But that is in modern terms. Recall the ancient term *philia* refers also to family ties. Like Krappman (1996) shows, by examining the philological roots of the verbal equivalents to the word *friend*, we could discover interesting nuances to the way central features of the relationship (as that of voluntariness) are valued in different cultures: "... friendship may even be defined in some cultures as indissoluble blood brotherhood, thus restricting a person's capacity to terminate friendships" (p. 20). In this regard, J. Annas (2003) claims friendship in general need not be freely chosen. Since in ancient thought *philia* referred to filial bonds and bonds with acquaintances, it could mean more "commitment to particular people" (p. 223).

are. Whether the ground of such associations is pleasure, utility, or virtue, they are together because they want to be. Would not adult intervention in adolescent's friendships – or for that matter, any sort of extrinsic intervention on any friendship- undermine the very possibility of the relationship?

There are at least two lines of answers to this concern. First, we could question its premise, i.e., the idea that we freely choose our friends. Second, with certain modifications of the premise we can accept that we choose our friends and, nonetheless, recognize that there are good and bad ways to exercise such freedom. As a result of this, we could also see that we might benefit from learning how to do it better, and that help from others need not be seen as jeopardizing the relationship.

In fact, within philosophy and psychology there are supporters of the idea that we do not choose our friends freely. Jennifer E. Whiting (1991), for instance, claims there are epistemological and practical limits to who I befriend and how many friends I have, even in the case of character friendship. In her words:

Character-friendship begins with *eunoia*, which is generic (or impersonal) affection for the character and ends of another. The beliefs and values which explain my having established a certain character in myself will place epistemological constraints on who may -given my beliefs and values- become an object of my *eunoia* [...] My mere tastes may render the virtues of some of those I encounter

more accessible to me than the similar virtues of others I encounter. So I will come to spend more time with some rather than others. Increased familiarity may increase my interest in another person [...and...] Increased investment in a person or a relationship may (like increased investment in an activity) increase my sense of reward, thus strengthening my commitment and preventing me from forming other attachments and commitments I may still regard as in some sense equally worthy. (p. 23)

Some psychologists, on the other hand, have shown there are certain personal and societal conditions that seem to determine friendship selection and quality. Frances E. Abound and Morton J. Mendelson (1996), for instance, study how similarity between friends may determine how children and adolescents choose their friends. They claim that according to the evidence,

Similarities in sex, race, age, and activity preferences seem to be important in friendship at all ages. Similarities in socioeconomic and school status appear important beyond childhood, as do similarities in attitudes, values, and social perception [...] The personal attributes of physical attractiveness, cognitive ability, sociability, aggression, and withdrawal predict children's attraction to peers, although other attributes might be relevant to friendship [...] Unlike the case of similarity, personal attributes may become relatively more important for older, than for younger, children. (pp. 105-106)

So it seems that, after all, we might not choose our friends as freely as we thought. Those epistemological or practical limits, either explained in psychological or sociological terms, do condition the formation and quality of the friendships. Notwithstanding this, however, we can still argue that the freedom required by the definition

of friendship is not freedom from *any* constraint (be it internal or external), but freedom from other people's interferences.

In fact, some have argued that what this aspect of friendship means is that the relationship is not based on biological ties or social laws (Krappman, 1996). Although we allow the possibility of becoming friends with a member of our family or with someone with whom we may have some other affiliation ruled by laws (such as a partner in a business, for instance) the concept of being friend with someone, as we understand it now, implies that we *choose* to engage in such a special relationship. No family member or ruler could tell us to be good friend with someone we do not appreciate.

I think this is a more substantive meaning of the element of freedom in the concept of friendship, and one that if lacking could in fact undermine the relationship. In this way, the first line of answer to the concern does not fully work. Although we recognized we do not choose our friends as freely as we thought, we still have certain margin of personal freedom from other's interference, and the concept of friendship seems to require such freedom. Moreover, the restrictions on choice of friends mentioned are merely reducing our total number of options – not restricting our freedom. Even within these restricted confines, I can choose which people I want to be friends with.

Now, regarding our question about what adults should do with children's and adolescents' friendships, we can try the second line of answer suggested above. Acknowledging the importance of freedom to friendship, we can recognize there are better and worse ways of engaging in the relationship and nurturing it, and because of that any person would benefit from learning how to do so well. I am thinking here that both good friends and good role models (parents, teachers, and tutors) help with that. Specifically, what can adults do in this direction?

2. 2. What we could do

2. 2.1. Acknowledge, care, facilitate

“For many of the troubles that children experience in their friendships -jealousy, exclusion from a clique, dominance, competitiveness- parents can do little directly to help, though of course their general support, sympathy and love can be enormously important as a buffer for the child.”
J. Dunn (2004: 161)

I am strongly inclined to believe that the first and most important thing we, as adults, could do regarding children's and adolescent's friendships is questioning the most common view (at least in the psychological literature) of these friendships as mainly a source of evils. Like any powerful thing, friendship can harm us or heal us, can make us good or bad. Surprisingly, the literature on friendship among children and adolescents has been overwhelmingly tilted

towards the negative side. My first suggestion, then, is just to acknowledge the importance of friendship for moral development in general, and specially for virtue cultivation.

Second, with such an acknowledgement should come an attitude of care for children's and adolescents' friendships, as well as respect for their capabilities and abilities to establish and nurture those relationships. A simple openness to the idea that children and adolescents do establish real friendships that are important for them (both subjectively and objectively) could make a great difference in the way we, as adults, view and treat these friendships. In a way, such respect could take the form of considering children and adolescents also as teachers of virtue.¹³⁹

Thirdly, such an acknowledgment and attitude would facilitate children's and adolescents' friendships by constructing what Nel Noddings (2008) calls "a moral climate – an educational world in which it is both desirable and possible to be good" (p. 168). The ground for such facilitation is, in one way, negative, since it means no interference. It is, in Patricia White's words, just "making space for

¹³⁹ Here I am specifically talking of them being teachers of other children, but I definitely think they could also be teachers of virtue to adults. In fact, at the beginning of my research I thought also how adults cultivate their virtues when being parents, thanks to the relationship of parenthood itself and to what children directly teach to them.

friendship” within homes and schools (P. White, 1990: 87). But caring about children’s and adolescents’ friendships, and facilitating them also means, in a more positive sense, being responsive and supportive. Adults need to understand the complexities of children’s and adolescents’ friendships and, at the same time, their powerful value in the formation of their characters and overall well-being.

As a consequence, I agree with Horn, Daddis and Killen’s (2008) conclusion in which they claim that since “... peer interactions and relationships are central to children’s social and moral development [...] moral education programs that ignore the peer context or view it as a barrier to overcome are missing important opportunities to facilitate the direction of social and moral development in young people” (pp. 282-283). Let’s explore, then, how a more substantive attitude towards children’s and adolescents’ friendships at home and school would look like.

2. 2. 2. Implementing some strategies

I think one of the most immediate responses to the recognition of the importance of character friendship for virtue cultivation is to say that maybe adults could become friends with children and then help them within the framework of that relationship. K. Kristjánsson (2007), for instance, shows that contrary to what the tradition says, within an

Aristotelian point of view, parents and their children can become character friends. He argues there are no structural barriers and no moral reasons that prevent the formation of true character friendship between parents and their children (non-adults and adults) (p.p. 113-124).

I agree with him, and I also think that with some modifications, the analysis could be cautiously applied to the teacher/student relationship. In the same vein, Blaine Fowers and Austen R. Anderson (unpublished) write:

Given its centrality to education, it is strange that the virtue of friendship has been so thoroughly neglected. It is vital that character educators include the relational processes of education highlighted by the concept of friendship in their materials and training so that teachers can systematically and consciously cultivate excellence in their relationships with students.

We suggest that it is only reasonable to ask students to cultivate character strengths in a trusting, stable environment characterized by commitment, support, encouragement, positive models, and a tangible concern for the students' welfare. We contend that character development can only ensue to the degree that these conditions are actualized. The most complete instantiation of educational friendships will take the form of virtue friendships, which are characterized by shared goals, seeing the good in each other, teamwork, and genuine interest in each other's welfare. Aristotle's *eudaimonic* ethics clarifies that virtue friendship is a necessary element of a flourishing life. We have argued that, as an integral aspect of human life, the best educational processes will have the form of virtue friendship (p.p. 23-24).

Again, I agree with Fowers' and Anderson's suggestions. My focus, nevertheless, is on the character friendships established by

children and adolescents among them, and in this section of the chapter my question is how adults could help in a substantial way to improve such relationships. There are some approaches that give positive guidance to adults about how to help children and adolescents in establishing good relationships with their peers. According to J. Dunn (2004), for instance, talking things over seems a good strategy. She claims that "...in general, discussions that help children to understand relationships between people, and to reflect on their own responses and the feelings of others, are likely to be helpful" (p. 162).

Some others have recommended a sort of mixture of different strategies. In this direction, when talking about the construction of a moral climate, N. Noddings (2008) recommends (a) *modeling*: "If we would teach the young to be moral persons, we must demonstrate moral behavior for them. From the care perspective, we must show them what it means to care" (p. 168); (b) *dialogue*: "It is in dialogue that we show care for another. But much more occurs. Language is expanded and polished. Logic is learned, exercised, corrected, and applied. Thinking is encouraged within the safety of caring relations..." (p. 170); (c) *practice*: "Every human encounter presents an opportunity to care [... In classrooms] working in groups can provide opportunities [...as well as] service learning" (p. 171); and (d) *confirmation*, which

refers to "...a carer's conscious act of affirming the morally best in another. In acts of confirmation, we attribute the cared-for the best possible motive consonant with reality" (p. 171).

I find Noddings approach very useful to construct what I think could help to foster friendship among children and adolescents. Moreover, it seems to me that the very same things she recommends adults to do at home and schools – modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation - are already occurring in character friendships.¹⁴⁰ Those strategies would function, then, when adults are trying to help children and adolescents to engage in good relationships, but also when children and adolescents want to engage or are already engaged in them.

I would like to explore further two notions of Nodding's theory. The notion of *dialogue*, and of what she calls *interpersonal reasoning*. In her (1994) she talks of three kinds of conversation relevant to moral

¹⁴⁰ In Chapter III I said character friendship (a) constitutes a unique form of experience in which we share or inhabit a substantial way of seeing with a close other; (b) facilitates a unique form of knowledge, the knowledge of a particular person (my-self and the other's self); (c) develops other emotions important for the cultivation of virtue besides admiration, such as love, shame, trust, and hope; and (d) is a praxis in which cooperative interactions and discussions function as a bridge between habituation of virtue at home and the public life. Noddings recommendations of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation within school practices sounds to me like incorporating in the classroom some of the elements I see as constitutive of character friendship (see especially c and d). I want to call special attention to what she calls *confirmation*, because it seems to be the practical application of the element of hope and trust I mentioned as a constitutive part of the process that leads to virtue cultivation among character friends.

education. She claims the first is formal or philosophical conversation, which in modern terms could be characterized as the result of a revision proposed by Habermas to the categorical imperative: "Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse" (Habermas, 1990, p. 66, cited by Noddings, 1994: 2).

Noddings calls theories of this nature "competence theories" (p. 2), because in order to participate in the conversation, the participants must comply some rational requirements (Kohlberg's theory belongs here). But this, she argues, is artificial, idealized conversation.

Noddings worries "... about the emphasis on a 'generalized other' rather than a concrete other. This concern is, I think, well considered. We are not well prepared in discourse ethics to meet and respond to real people with all their needs and foibles" (p. 3).

The second form of conversation relevant for moral education is seen as participation in a tradition, what has been called "immortal conversation," a form of dialogue-instruction. The tradition could be religious (character education comes from it (p. 5)), or what we know as liberal studies. But Noddings claims:

...studying what great thinkers have said about immortal questions is no guarantee that one will be more honest, decent, loving or even open-minded. Without mentioning names, I can easily think of four or five superbly educated persons (all of whom deplore the condition of the American mind) who are themselves incapable of hearing or

responding generously to views that differ from their own. Again we have a performance gap. (1994: 6)

Thirdly, Noddings talks of ordinary conversation, and claims that the quality of ordinary conversation may be at the very heart of moral education (p. 8). She says this is important because for many children and adolescents, "...real conversation in which all parties speak, listen and respond to one another" is a rare experience (p. 8). It is important to highlight that Noddings is talking here about the sort of interactions of adults with children and adolescents, and arguing that there are not many real or ordinary conversations among them. She argues this is bad because this kind of conversation, if meet with some special qualities, could be even more formative than the two previous kinds of conversations. Those special qualities are, in her words:

First, the adult participants must be reasonably good people –people who try to be good, who consider the effects of their acts on others and respond to suffering with concern and compassion. Secondly, the adults must care for the children and enjoy their company. When children engage in real talk with adults who like and respect them, they are likely to emulate those adults [... Third] Perhaps most significantly of all, in ordinary conversation, we are aware that our partners in conversation are more important than the topic. Participants are not trying to win a debate; they are not in a contest with an opponent. They are conversing because they like each other and want to be together. The moment is precious in itself" (1994: 8).

Noddings claims a big part of the reason why ordinary conversations are so valuable for moral education is that the third

quality – i.e., the partner of conversation is more important than the topic or the truth¹⁴¹- helps the participants in such interactions engage in constructive conflicts in which all learn from each other and from the relationship itself (pp. 9-10).

This idea of constructive conflicts has to do with the second notion I want to explore from Noddings, the notion of genuine *interpersonal reasoning*. In her (1991) she argues that teaching critical thinking or mathematical reasoning at schools is as important as teaching genuine interpersonal reasoning, but the two kind of reasoning are quite different (p. 157-158). Moreover, she says that while people at schools have been mostly worried by the development of the first kind of reasoning, the second has been dangerously neglected:

I want to suggest, however, that we face an even more important challenge in the area of interpersonal reasoning. The capacity of moral agents to talk appreciatively with each other regardless of fundamental differences is crucial in friendship, marriage, politics, business, and world peace. We see evidence everywhere that the

¹⁴¹ This third quality is related to my thesis in that it requires to see the other as a friend. Recall that one requirement of friendship within the Aristotelian view is the love of the friend for herself, and the seeking of the other's well-being for her own sake. Noddings argues that the sort of ordinary conversation that is of high value for moral education is one in which the participants consider each other and the relationship more important than the topic or the truth. We must have in mind, nevertheless, that Aristotle wrote "...though we love both the truth and our friends, reverence is due to the truth first" (1096a15). And he says this is specially so for philosophers. I think it would require an additional exegetical work to elucidate what this statement means in light of his whole work and the value he attributes to philosophy, the political life, and happiness.

capacity is sorely underdeveloped, and yet we have so far given the task little attention in educational circles. (p. 157)

Noddings claims interpersonal reasoning develops through direct contact, practice, and close relationships (pp 164-169); requires discernment, receptivity (p. 166), and mutual knowledge (p. 167). Finally, she recommends practical strategies for schools, designed to extend contact among students and teachers (pp. 167-169).

I think what Noddings proposes would facilitate, encourage, and nurture good relationships among children and adolescents, as well as good relationships between them and adults. The formation of closer bonds, as we have seen those of friendship are, are mainly a matter of choice. The formation, continuity, and good quality of them are also a matter of time and continued effort from the parties involved. But if we, as adults, recognize the privileged place that good friendships have in all human lives, we must inculcate the adequate conditions for them to flourish, and if we recognize their power to shape characters we must cherish and cultivate them.

In Chapter II we saw how Blum (1980) defended the idea that a complete moral theory would incorporate both impersonal and personal (or impartial and partial) concerns. Human lives are so complex that every day we have to deal with moral requirements whose response cannot be properly delivered or performed while trying to be impartial, as most of the theories within the mainstream

tell us. A complete moral theory would also give place, among other things, to close relationships such as friendship. Many theories have already recognized the high value of character friendship for human flourishing, but less than a handful have recognized its value for moral development and especially for the cultivation of virtue. Among them P. White (1990), who writes this finishing note in her paper on Friendship and Education:

This discussion of friendship is part of a larger piece of work on the democratic virtues, that is, those dispositions, like self-respect, self-esteem and courage, which are needed to sustain a democratic community. The fraternal feelings not discussed here which citizens should have towards fellow citizens are perhaps more obviously linked to the democratic community. But the intimate notion of friendship which has been the focus of this treatment seems to me just as much to characterise a democratic society. In such a society friendship can be publicly celebrated as something of intrinsic value which may on occasion override other values. This would be an impossible stance in a totalitarian society. In the latter, when friendship competes with the subject's allegiance to the party or state, it can never win out. (p. 90)

When Noddings claims that only having philosophical conversations “We are not well prepared in discourse ethics to meet and respond to real people with all their needs and foibles” (1994: 3), I think her complaint is similar to that of Blum and White. A complete theory about character education needs to give a special place to the development of friendship, due to its privileged place in a good human life.

3. Some practical applications

It is very difficult to find schools or actual projects based in the notion that character friendship plays a fundamental role in the development of good character traits (or virtues) in students. Whereas theoretical and empirical research about peer relationships among children/adolescents and their performance at school is abundant,¹⁴² it is not the case for what has to do with the deeper relationship that friendship is. There might be several possible explanations for this, one of them that friendship is supposed to emerge spontaneously and freely between individuals. As I previously argued, this may be true to a certain point. Nevertheless, the recognition of this does not imply that we do not need to know more about the nature of friendship and how to nurture it. We need to know more about children/adolescents'

¹⁴² Of special relevance to my thesis is the work developed by H. Marsh and colleagues (started during the 1980s), through which he formulated and tested what he called the Big-fish-little-pond effect (BFLPE). According to the BFLPE, children who attend a high-ability school show a negative academic self-concept but positive academic achievements. They explain that upward comparisons have negative effects on children's academic self-evaluations when such comparisons are forced (H. Marsh et al., 2008: 95), but this comparison seems to motivate, at the same time, children's self-improvement (p. 97), at least in academic matters. As a consequence of this, we could say that "...upward comparisons (comparisons to people who are "better" than us) might produce admiration, but they also can produce low self-esteem and defensiveness as people feel inferior to those admirable people. How do these comparisons operate, though, when we compare ourselves to peers versus more powerful others, moral superiors/exemplars?" I thank Dr. Brown for pointing this out to me. I will have to leave the answer to this question for the future.

friendships because we should help them and can help them to engage and maintain good quality friendships.

While we advance in that endeavor, here we have some examples of current projects working in the more ample and necessary task of procuring a nurturing environment for the emergence of good relationships among students.¹⁴³ They are projects based on what is called *pedagogies of empowerment*. Those pedagogies have as their theoretical successors the theories of cooperative learning and collaborative learning, in which students are encouraged to play a more active role in their learning and the learning of their classmates. Some of these projects are:

1. The Collaborative Classroom:

“...is a model that honors all teachers and supports all students with intentional, field-tested practices that create safe environments. In Collaborative Classrooms, teachers facilitate an authentic exchange of ideas and *children learn to become caring, principled people as well as thoughtful, disciplined learners*. Teachers who use the Collaborative Classroom model make an intentional shift from having a classroom where they do the majority of the talking to constructing a learning situation and then facilitating it through student thinking and talking.

The Core Principles of the Collaborative Classroom

- Social and academic curricula are interdependent and integrated.
- *Fostering caring relationships and building inclusive and safe environments are foundational practices for both the student and adult learning community.*
- Classroom learning experiences should be built around students' constructing knowledge and engaging in action.
- Honoring and building on students' intrinsic motivation leads to engagement and achievement. (Retrieved from:

¹⁴³ Based on Berkowitz (2011).

<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community>
(Emphasis mine)

2. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning:

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, *establish and maintain positive relationships*, and make responsible decisions.

SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful.

Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker. Many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. This is best done through effective classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school” (Retrieved from: <http://www.casel.org/>
(Emphasis mine)

3. Responsive Classroom:

“The Responsive Classroom approach is a way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. Developed by classroom teachers, the approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies day in and day out.

Guiding Principles

The Responsive Classroom approach is informed by the work of educational theorists and the experiences of exemplary classroom teachers. Seven principles guide this approach:

- The social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.
- Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.*
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills: cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.*

-Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach.
-Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach.
-How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community. (Retrieved from: www.responsiveclassroom.org Emphasis mine)

It is difficult to find similar projects focused on adolescents (both in high-school and college), not only in terms of the general issue of how good relationships among them function and how they are best fostered, but also in terms of more intimate relationships like friendship. Again, I think this is a serious lack within educational theory and practice in general. Moreover, if we consider that the task of virtue cultivation lasts our entire lives, neglecting the fundamental role of character friendship within it is a disturbing theoretical gap.

V. Conclusions and further developments

In her seminal paper “Modern Moral Philosophy,” Elizabeth Anscombe urged a change in the focus in moral philosophy away from deontology and consequentialism towards Aristotelian ethics. She pointed out some gaps that need to be filled “... by an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic a virtue is, and above all of human ‘flourishing’” (1958: 15). Since then, a good number of moral philosophers have been trying to fill these gaps and advance the development of new theories that help us to answer one of the biggest questions posited since ancient times: how should we live?

As expected, virtue theory answers that we should live virtuous lives. The elucidation of what this means requires, as Anscombe claimed, understanding the basic concepts involved. Yet, while we are occupied in this task another pressing Aristotelian question comes to us: how can we *become* virtuous? And despite the fact that Aristotle said ethics should be more concerned about answering this question than trying to uncover what virtue is, the matter of virtue cultivation has received less attention in contemporary virtue theory. There are, nevertheless, some interesting and valuable works on this topic.

In Chapter I, I presented three good examples of such works within contemporary philosophy. They have something in common with the majority of the other works on the subject matter: they argue that we become virtuous mainly by emulating role models, either real or fictitious, directly or indirectly known, close or distant. Although I agree with the idea that we need good models to cultivate virtue, my motivation to begin this research was the thought that this may not capture the whole picture. The fact that Aristotle himself devoted two books of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to friendship suggests a method for filling out the rest of the picture.

After this research, my main conclusion is that much more work is needed in this direction. I found that within philosophy there is an unjustified and prevalent suspicion regarding the moral status and value of friendship, despite an almost general agreement regarding its fundamental connection with human flourishing. Virtue theorists should pay attention to friendship if they want to understand what it means to live a good human life. Moreover, in trying to answer the specific question of how to become virtuous they should take a look at what other disciplines such as psychology have found about this matter. Psychologists have good evidence that supports the connection between friendship and moral development. As I showed,

some of this evidence works as indirect evidence to support the idea that character friendship is fundamental for the cultivation of virtue.

Nevertheless, much work in this direction is also needed within psychology. Almost every single scholar consulted had a complaint about how scarce the work is on the subject of children's friendships. The complaint is even louder when it comes to adolescent's friendships.

I think philosophers and psychologists must work together in trying to understand the ethical dimensions of children's and adolescent's friendships. This is important because a sound moral theory cannot be oblivious anymore to facts about human nature. And moral theorists here need the help from empirical and social sciences, because something so vitally important must not only be conceived in the abstract.

Besides the issues of how friendship works among children and adolescents, and the ethical dimensions of these relationships, I think we could benefit from recognizing some contextual differences that may affect the connection between friendship and happiness. In particular, we must recognize how different cultures and societies understand, interpret, and live these concepts¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁴ Luckily, I found this work that shows how much more research on this is needed: "Friendship and Happiness Latin America: A Review", by A. Garcia, F. Nogueira Pereira and M. D. Corrêa de Macedo, 2015.

There is another shocking but unfortunately unsurprising gap in the literature about friendship: there is even more scarce research on friendship and women. Are women's conceptions and practices of friendship in any way different, special, or unique? Is character friendship between men and women possible? If there is any substantial difference between the way women and men conceive and practice friendship, what implications does this have for our treatment of human nature and human flourishing?

Another interesting venue to keep exploring friendship is its political implications. In (1980), M. Nussbaum argues that one of the main differences between Aristotle's and Plato's view about political unity is that Aristotle considers self-respect as fundamentally developed within the framework of character friendship (p. 427). That is so, she claims, partially because political unity within Aristotelian terms requires emotional ties, but also because character friendship refines self-awareness and self-criticism. On the other hand, in regard to the subject of friendship in totalitarian states, M. Shanley (1993) argues that liberal polity should make possible the conditions for friendship to flourish. And although N. Badhwar (1993), shows interesting relations between friendship and justice (1993: 26), she nevertheless claims friendship is sabotaged by the liberal conception of the self as individualistic (p. 33-34). Friedman (1989) refers works

as that of Mary Dietz (1985) and Jane Mansbridge (1975) where we can find suggestions about how friendship offers models for a type of civic bond that emphasizes democratic values, participatory citizenship, and egalitarianism (p. 12, note 9). With them, many others have worked on the exploration of the rich notion of civic friendship.

All of this has to do with an interesting question that has been pressing me for a while. Is there any substantial and justified way in which what we learn from friends and our relationship with them could be extended to others (people with whom we are not character friends)? According to Friedman (1989), "...commitment to a person, such as a friend, takes as its primary focus the needs, wants, attitudes, judgments, behavior, and overall way of being of a particular person. It is specific to that person and is not generalizable to others" (p. 4). I agree, but I think some of the things we learn and gain in friendship could be generalized. For instance, by learning to care about particulars we could "generalize" that sort of care to others. In many cases, attending to humanity as such should encompass attending to how "humanity" manifests in different ways, depending (for example) on things such as society, time, gender, age, or race. In many cases being fair implies taking care of particularities, even to respond to "humanity". I think those works that suggest friendship as a model of political bond capture this idea. After all, Aristotle himself

claimed there would not be need for justice in a society where good friendships among the citizens exist.

I am not sure if the lack of research on how children, adolescents, women, and different cultures understand and live friendship is just a coincidence. Regardless of the motivations and causes for such a deficiency, it shows there is still a long path to walk before we fully understand what the question “how should we live?” involves. If those gaps are not filled, the “we” in that question will be always misunderstood, and the answer to the question about human flourishing will remain ever elusive.

In the specific subject of virtue cultivation, we need to explore more deeply how other relationships besides the relationships with parents, teachers, and role models in general operate. We also need to move on from our predominant focus in moral development on younger children. The cultivation of virtue is a never-ending-task, and for that reason we need to understand how the different relationships that impact us at different stages of our lives can also shape our characters towards virtue.

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