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Dean Cocking; Jeanette Kennett

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Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary discussions of friendship typically focus on the value of friendship: the duties which friendship imposes, the motivations proper to acts of friendship, and the ways in which these pose a challenge to impartialist ethical theory. What has not received so much attention is the nature of friendship itself. Yet a plausible account of the nature of friendship would seem not only helpful but necessary to ground and offer direction to discussions about the value of friendship. Though 'friendship' is an elastic term, that is ordinarily applied to relationships of varying levels of intimacy, philosophical interest has centered on those intimate friendships which feature reciprocal deep affection, well-wishing, and the desire for shared experiences.¹ In this article we undertake an exploration of the nature of such friendships and, through a consideration of two significant and familiar views, arrive at a new account of the nature of close or companion friendships. We believe this account does help to explain why friendship is valuable and provides direction for future characterization of its value.

While all accounts of friendship agree on the importance of such things as affection and well-wishing to close friendship, what distinguishes the accounts we consider is their view of the self in friendship and the role they give to disclosure of the self in the construction of intimacy. A long-standing and influential strand in the philosophical lit-

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1. Some worthy recent discussions include Elizabeth Telfer, "Friendship," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 71 (1970–71): 223–41; L. A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed., *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Michael Stocker, "Values and Purposes: The Limits of Teleology and the Ends of Friendship," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 747–65.

erature on friendship claims that companion friendship is marked by the great extent to which the self is disclosed in her relationship to the other. This self-disclosure is thought to cement the bonds of trust and intimacy that exist between close friends and has been understood to mark companion friendship in two sorts of ways. On one account companion friendship is marked by the great extent to which we disclose ourselves to our close friends. On a second account what marks companion friendship is the great extent to which we see ourselves in the close friend. Since the first account focuses on the extent to which one reveals oneself to the friend by sharing private information, call this account the secrets view of friendship. Since the second account focuses on the extent to which one finds one's traits reflected in the friend, call this account the mirror view of friendship.

These two accounts of friendship point to different phenomena; the revealing of oneself on the one hand and the reflection of oneself on the other. One might therefore accept one but not the other. So one might think that the mutual revealing of oneself to the other is an important constituent of friendship but that the seeing of oneself in each other is irrelevant. The two views, however, are united in holding that central to the trust and intimacy in companion friendship is that one's self is disclosed in the relationship—either I disclose my self to the other or my self is disclosed in the other.

We argue that companion friendship is not importantly marked by self-disclosure as understood in either of these two ways. One's close friends need not be markedly similar to oneself, as is claimed by the mirror account, nor is the role of private information in establishing and maintaining intimacy important in the way claimed by the secrets view. Our claim will be that the mirror and secrets views not only fail to identify features that are in part constitutive of close or companion friendship, but that they miss the mark quite broadly and fail to capture anything significant and distinctive about the ways in which friendship has an impact on the self. The article will proceed as follows. In the first section we outline our account of the self in friendship. In the next two sections we examine the mirror and secrets views and develop our own view in counterpoint to these. In the final section we defend our own account by showing how it provides the governing conditions which do distinguish friendship from other kinds of relations between persons.

DRAWING THE OTHER: THE SELF IN FRIENDSHIP

Our positive thesis can be briefly stated. It is this: as a close friend of another, one is characteristically and distinctively receptive to being directed and interpreted and so in these ways drawn by the other. What do we mean by this? First consider a case in which we are directed by a friend.

It is a common feature of close friendships that within them, each

person is receptive to developing interests or activities, which they do not already pursue, primarily because they are the interests and activities of the other. So, for example, my friend Iris asks me to the ballet and on account of this interest in the ballet being Iris's interest I willingly accept her invitation. I may never have had any real interest in ballet yet I do not go begrudgingly or out of any sense of obligation. Rather I am happy to be moved directly by her interest in choosing to spend the evening this way; I am happy to attend the ballet with her when I would certainly not be interested, or in this way interested, if I was asked by someone else, say, for example, a new colleague or my elderly aunt.²

On the basis of this receptivity to my friend's interests, aspects of my character may change in ways that they otherwise might not have and such changes may persist beyond the friendship. I might get infected by Iris's enthusiasm for ballet; typically, I will at least be interested in understanding and appreciating it, simply because she loves it.³ Thus I may change from someone who had a marked distaste for high culture to someone with a genuine appreciation of the athleticism and grace of dance. Even in the case that I never develop an independent interest in ballet, that is, an interest not mediated by my friendship with Iris, the interest I have in it through my friendship with Iris, does structure our relationship and who I am within it. It is likely, then, that I will come to resemble her more than I did, but it is not this outcome which is important to an account of friendship. It is rather the distinctive kind of responsiveness to the other, which mediates any such move toward similarity, that characterizes companion friendship.

To say, then, that one is directed by one's close friends is to point to the distinctive ways in which one's choices are shaped by the other and one's interests and activities become oriented toward those of the friend.⁴ Let us now sketch a second feature that we also think significant in characterizing the nature of the self in friendship.

2. Here my lack of interest in ballet itself would be evidenced by my being more likely to make an excuse or my different kind of interest indicated by such thoughts as: "I'm at a loose end, why not?" or "I don't know many people at work, this might be a way. . . ." Or I might attend out of a sense of duty, reminding myself that my aunt doesn't get out much and can't get to the ballet without an escort. The other person's interest would not of itself provide the reason.

3. Of course, one could deny the force of the 'simply' here by pointing to the possibility of a friend's interests in, say, deplorable or idiotic pursuits. So, for example, the fact that my friend likes to watch sadistic films or to count blades of grass or to go bungee jumping (when I suffer vertigo) would not and should not suffice to make me interested in these things. But the fact that there may be constraints on the interest one can have in one's friend's interests does not touch the point we make here. It remains true to say that one can be disposed to be interested in pursuing certain activities that one otherwise would not be, simply on account of one's friend.

4. It has been suggested to us that the term 'direction' is an infelicitous one for our purposes since it has unfortunate connotations of domination and control. In the context

Consider how we often recognize and highlight aspects of our close friend's character. So, for example, Judy teasingly points out to John how he always likes to be right. John has never noticed this about himself; however, now that Judy has pointed it out to him he recognizes and accepts that this is indeed a feature of his character. Seeing himself through Judy's eyes changes his view of himself. But beyond making salient an existing trait of character, the close friend's interpretation of the character trait or foible can have an impact on how that trait continues to be realized. Within the friendship John's liking to be right may become a running joke which structures how the friends relate to each other. John continues to insist that he is right; however, his insistences are now for the most part treated lightheartedly and take on a self-consciously ironic tone. And John may be led by Judy's recognition and interpretation of his foibles to more generally take himself less seriously. Thus, John's character and his self-conception are also, in part, drawn, or shaped, by his friend's interpretations of him.

Having one's interests and attitudes directed, interpreted, and so drawn in the ways just described is, in our view, both typical and distinctive of companion friendships, yet has been largely neglected in philosophical literature on the subject.⁵ Indeed the phenomenon of being drawn in these ways by one's close friends does not sit well with the self-disclosure views mentioned above for it has precious little to do with self-disclosure as understood by the secrets or mirror accounts of friendship. It is not that I must reveal myself to, or see myself in, the other, to any great extent, but that, in friendship, I am distinctively receptive both to the other's interests and to their way of seeing me. And on account of this receptivity to Iris's interests or Judy's interpretations of my traits, I develop in a way that is particular to the relationship; the self my friend sees is, at least in part, a product of the friendship. Here we get a very different view of how the self is to be understood in companion friendship to that suggested by the mirror and secrets views.

The mirror view and the secrets view of friendship imply that the self is a discrete and rather static thing that may be disclosed to the friend or found reflected in the friend. On a drawing account the self is conceived as a relational thing that is, in part, developed or molded through

of a discussion of friendship, which is acknowledged on all sides to be a relationship of mutuality and choice, this certainly would be unfortunate. We hope our spelling out of the concept of direction throughout the article makes it clear that we have a common and more benign usage in mind. I am no more dominated or controlled by my friend when I allow myself to be directed by her interest in deciding what movie to see than I am dominated or controlled by the passerby whom I ask for directions to the cathedral. We thank the referees for encouraging us to clarify this point.

5. It is true that Aristotle emphasizes the importance of shared activity to friendship but, as we will argue, he sees this as a product of the friends' preexisting shared tastes and shared conception of the good life. For Aristotle change is not integral to friendship—indeed it is more likely to threaten friendship.

the friendship, and this process of mutual drawing seems to us central to the establishment and maintenance of the intimacy of companion friendship. Indeed, we will claim that companion friendships cannot get off the ground, let alone flourish, for people who significantly lack the capacity to be responsive to direction and interpretation by another. As such, the process of mutual drawing is partly constitutive of such friendships. However, a failure to share one's secrets or to find oneself significantly reflected in another is not, in itself, a barrier to the establishment or development of friendship. Nevertheless, the idea that our friends give us a view of ourselves is the kernel of truth to be found, misinterpreted, so we believe, in the mirror view of friendship. Let us now turn to this view.

THE MIRROR VIEW OF FRIENDSHIP

On a familiar Aristotelian view of companion friendship, the choosing of a friend is based on the mutual recognition of one another's virtue. In this mutual recognition each of us recognizes the virtue we have in common as constituting preexisting "firm and stable" features of one another's character.⁶ This kind of revealing or disclosure of oneself in the other is seen as a necessary condition of friendship itself. Aristotle argues that we are related to our friend as we are related to ourselves: in choosing a friend we choose another self. Friendship is based on self-love; as such our choice of the friend is based on an appreciation of the similarity of the other to oneself. Aristotle puts it this way: "Now equality and likeness are friendship, and especially the likeness of those who are like in virtue" (*Nichomachean Ethics* [EN] 1159a35).⁷ He appears to hold indeed that friendship is not possible in the absence of the similarity to self that we seek in each other. Of people unequal in virtue he says: "How could they be friends when they neither approved of the same things nor delighted in and were pained by the same things. For not even with regard to each other will their tastes agree, and without this (as we saw) they cannot be friends" (EN 1165b14–35).

On the Aristotelian version of the mirror view friends mutually acknowledge their similarity in virtue. We will not directly take up Aristotle's claim that companion friendship is only available to the virtuous. Rather we will focus upon the more general idea that it is the mutual acknowledgement of similarity which characterizes companion friend-

6. Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle and the Shared Life," in Badhwar, ed., pp. 91–107, p. 98.

7. See also, e.g., EN 1156b17. "For all friendship is for the sake of good or of pleasure . . . and is based on a certain resemblance; and to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves; for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends." Here it seems clear that Aristotle's view is that all friendships, including friendships of pleasure and utility, are based on resemblance.

ships. What reason is there to claim similarity to be an important mark of friendship?

It seems a matter of common observation that people who are markedly dissimilar can be very good friends.⁸ Steinback's protagonists Lenny and George in *Of Mice and Men* present a clear case of such dissimilarity. But perhaps in such extreme examples, the marked dissimilarity between the characters of the friends is extrinsic to those features of character upon which the relation of friendship is based. If so, then it might be that in the respects in which two people are markedly dissimilar they are not companion friends. In *Of Mice and Men*, for example, Lenny and George might be thought markedly dissimilar, not in those features that mark their friendship, but rather those that mark a father and backward son relationship. Against this thought, however, it seems clear that people can be companion friends precisely with respect to the ways in which they are dissimilar. An example close to our experience is the case of two friends, one of whom is deeply cautious and the other rather reckless. These friends recognize the contrast between their characters, and this contrast plays a significant role in structuring their relationship. The cautious one knows that she could never resemble her friend in recklessness, yet she is attracted by this aspect of his character. The reckless one, while remaining quite reckless, regards with affection his friend's caution. Far from being extrinsic to the friendship these dissimilar features are features in respect of which they are friends and which govern much of the interplay between them. Moreover, there is no obvious reason why this sort of case should be thought unusual. For, while it is often remarked that people are well suited on account of their similarity, it is just as commonly held that opposites attract.⁹ The common wisdom on these matters is ambiguous and as such is of little use, either as a support or a rejection of the mirror view. We need to look deeper.

It is plausible to suppose, with Aristotle, that the lesser friendships of pleasure and utility are based on mutually acknowledged resemblance. So, for example, it is unremarkable that on the basis of a resemblance between you and I in terms of sporting interests or academic interests, we share a regular friendly game of squash or a drink after work to toss

8. We acknowledge that for any two friends a great many points of similarity could be found. But, for any two *people* a great many points of similarity could be found.

9. There are numerous examples of this phenomenon in popular culture. Television's *Odd Couple* and the nursery rhyme Jack Spratt spring to mind. Another well-known literary case is that of Darcy and Bingley in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen writes: "Between him and Darcy there was a very steady friendship in spite of a great opposition of character.—Bingley was endeared to Darcy by the easiness, openness, ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied" (*Pride and Prejudice*, ed. James Kinsley, World's Classics [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990]), p. 13.

around some new ideas. But while shared interests and activities are certainly a feature of intimate friendships, too, we do not think the mirror view gives the right account of the nature of a companion friendship and the place of commonality within it. In our view, the development of the friendly relations mentioned here toward companion friendship would not be marked by the recognition of further or greater resemblance of one to the other (any more than it would be by the recognition of further or greater contrasts between one another), but rather by the emergence and acceptance of a degree of direction and interpretation of each by the other.

First, consider the direction case. It is a commonplace that two people can be very similar in respect of their interests and indeed their characters and yet have no inclination toward friendship. So the discovery of further similarity of interests between two workmates need not herald increasing intimacy. I may like to discuss philosophy with you but have no wish to go to the football game with you upon discovering that you, too, follow football. The news that you, too, follow football will not of itself direct me to spend more time with you. For recall the case of my friend who loves the ballet. Here the point was that I do not share her interest in the ballet itself. Nevertheless, when she asks me if I would like to go I am responsive to being directed by her interest. It's not the case, then, that the development of companion friendship is even helped very much, let alone conditional on, our discovering more tastes in common. Rather, irrespective of our interests being alike, what matters in friendship is that we are responsive to our interests being directed by each other.¹⁰ It is this responsiveness to each other's direction which provides for and helps create the commonality we may note in deep friendships, even those between individuals who are markedly dissimilar.

Now consider how interpretation of the other differs from reflection of the other. On the mirror view I see myself in you. We are alike, not in every respect of course, but in character, interests, and background we need to be relevantly similar and to recognize our similarity. It is this recognition which leads me to love you as a natural extension of self-love.¹¹

10. I may of course be disposed from motives other than friendship to pursue activities that we have in common. I may be motivated by ambition to spend more time with you. What this also suggests, then, is that even if the recognition of greater similarity between us provides the occasion for us to spend more time together this need not indicate a move toward companion friendship.

11. It follows then that I cannot love you for any characteristics which I am unable to love in myself, and it is this kind of thought that underpins Aristotle's view that companion friendship is only available to the virtuous, for only they can truly love themselves. There is some truth in this last claim. Perhaps I am not inclined toward friendship with you because I do not like what I see of me when I look at you. I see my mean streak reflected in you or my tendency to brood over imagined slights. I am surely more likely to be inclined toward friendship with someone in whom I see reflected my particular sense of humor or my burning concern with social issues.

My self-image is confirmed through seeing myself reflected in you. The mirror view claims then that we can be friends only insofar as we happen to be alike.¹² On the face of it this view appears quite narcissistic.¹³ But even if it is, it might still provide the correct account of the nature of close friendship. We do not therefore rest our objection to the mirror view on value-laden charges, such as the one from narcissism.¹⁴ Our objection is simply that the mirror view misrepresents the depth and nature of the engagement which friends have with each other and the impact which each has on the other. For you do not passively reflect my own characteristics; what you give back to me is not a reflection, but an interpretation of me, and for this you do not need to be like me. The better analogy here is not of a mirror but of a portrait. The portrait painter does not aim to produce a mirror image of her subject. Though she is appropriately constrained by and sensitive to her subject her role is not that of a copyist. She is not neutral with respect to her subject. Rather, a good artist draws her subject in a new light; she influences and enriches our sense of the person portrayed. So, too, do our close friends draw us and so enrich our sense of self through their engaged interpretations of us. I do not see myself in you as the mirror view suggests, I see myself through you. We are thus, to some significant extent, each other's creators.¹⁵

This interpretive account of the nature and role of self-disclosure in companion friendship suggests a deeper reason to reject the mirror view; namely, that the mirror view posits or implies a mistaken view of the self or of the self in friendship. The mirror view seems to imply that we come to friendship as fully formed and self-sufficient individuals. This view of the self, which has informed so much of moral and political philosophy,

12. Of course, Aristotle thinks that friendship between the virtuous involves people of stable character and dispositions and so will not be so easily dissolved as the lesser friendships of pleasure and utility. Nevertheless, he holds that great disparity in any respect puts friendship out of reach and goes so far as to say that, "if we were right in saying that friend wishes good to friend for his sake, his friend must remain the sort of being he is" (EN 1159a11).

13. That Aristotle's mirror view of friendship has this narcissistic element is supported by Elijah Millgram's examination of it in "Aristotle on Making Other Selves," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17 (1987): 361–76. Millgram concludes that "Aristotle's explanations of friendship are uniformly self-oriented . . . self-love is playing too great, and the wrong kind of, a role" (see pp. 375–76).

14. Indeed, one might say that such value-laden objections are misguided in targeting an account of the nature of friendship. However, one might say that it is a constraint on the plausibility of any account of the nature of friendship that such an account does not violate the positive value that we place on friendship.

15. And here we note an important difference between the interpretations of the portrait painter and that of the friend. As is well recognized, friendship is a reciprocal relationship. The reciprocity of the relation itself influences the process and the outcome of creative interpretation in friendship. This is not true of creative interpretation in the portrait painter case. The subject is passive with respect to the interpretation.

is under serious challenge on several fronts. Feminist theorists, for example, have insisted that the assumption of individual self-sufficiency is implausible and argue that the self is primarily created in and through social relations.¹⁶ If this is right, then it would be a virtue of our account of direction and interpretation that the self in friendship is not seen as a distinct, autonomous entity that is found mirrored in the other. Rather, the self in friendship is, in part, a thing that is constituted by and particular to the friendship.

At this point it might be objected that the success of this kind of attack on the mirror view depends on targeting a rather simple version of this view. On a more sophisticated reading it could be argued that the mirror view need not be wedded to a view of the self as created in isolation from, and then found mirrored by, those with whom one becomes companion friends. For while Aristotle holds self-sufficiency to be a criterion of the virtuous life, Nancy Sherman explains that this does not mean that Aristotle, like Plato, aligns the virtuous life with the ascetic life of contemplation where one's virtue is a self-contained entity created in isolation from others. On the Aristotelian view says Sherman: "Since friends are among the goods which make a life self-sufficient, self-sufficiency is relational and the good life, a life dependent upon and interwoven with others."¹⁷

How does the having of friends contribute to self-sufficiency? For Aristotle, as for us, friendship is an important vehicle for self-awareness and self-knowledge. In the *Magna Moralia* he says:

Since, then, it is both a most difficult thing, as some of the sages have said, to attain a knowledge of oneself, and also a most pleasant (for to know oneself is pleasant)—now we are not able to see what we are from ourselves . . . as then when we wish to see our own face,

16. See, e.g., Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allenheld, 1983), esp. p. 41; and Mary Ann Warren, "The Moral Significance of Birth," *Hypatia* 4 (1989): 46–65. It is doubtful, Warren says, "that a child reared in total isolation from human . . . beings could develop the capacities for self-awareness and social interaction that are essential to personhood." Nathaniel Branden argues in "Love and Psychological Visibility" (in Badhwar, ed.) that the self is made visible by the responses of the other in friendship and love. He says, "All of us, to a profoundly important extent, experience who we are in the context of our relationships. . . . And we keep growing and evolving *through our encounters*" (p. 69). We agree with Branden here and claim that our view explains that evolution of the self through friendship. We disagree, however, with his further claim, that this experience of psychological visibility can only be provided by someone who is similar in the respects in which one becomes visible.

17. Sherman, p. 94. See also EN 1097a34–b25. As John Campbell has pointed out to us, it is not really clear that this view is coherent. We can imagine that one might be dependent upon one's friends in order to attain self-sufficiency. But unless at some point one's virtue does not depend upon others how could one claim to be self-sufficient in virtue? We will let this apparent contradiction between self-sufficiency and dependence upon others slide and grant that there might be some way to render this view intelligible.

we do so by looking in the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves we can obtain that knowledge by looking at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self. If, then, it is pleasant to know oneself, and it is not possible to know this without having someone else for a friend, the self-sufficing man will require friendship in order to know himself. (*Magna Moralia* 1213a10–26)

In a sympathetic interpretation of this passage, John Cooper argues that regardless of surface dissimilarities of character, friends typically feel a strong sense of kinship. That is, they may be similar without necessarily knowing in what their similarity consists. By studying the other's character, therefore, they come to a better knowledge of their own. Here, he says, "the presumption is that even an intimate friend remains distinct enough to be studied objectively; yet because one intuitively knows oneself to be fundamentally the same in character as he is, one obtains through him an objective view of oneself." There is therefore in Aristotle's view of friendship a recognition "of the social bases of a secure self-concept and of the role intimacy plays in providing the means to it."¹⁸

Perhaps Cooper's interpretation of the importance of friendship to self-awareness in terms of the objective presentation of ourselves provided by the friend, can adequately fill out the idea that friends direct and interpret us. For through providing an objective presentation of ourselves that allows us to see ourselves better (as in a good mirror) our picture of ourselves is changed. Aspects of oneself that one could not see, one does now see. The more accurate picture of oneself directs and interprets one's character relative to the inaccurate, or at least less informed, picture that one previously had. But how can studying my friend's character change me when what I become aware of is a pre-existing objective feature of my character?

This is not too difficult to understand. If I look in the mirror I may discover things about my appearance that I wasn't aware of. Perhaps my hair is sticking up or my shirt is hanging out. So I pat my hair down and tuck my shirt in, thus changing my appearance. Seeing myself in my friend changes me in more profound ways. If, through being with my friend, I discover my own latent interest in ballet, I develop this interest. I now think of myself as a person who likes ballet; as a result my self-image changes and so, too, do my reasons for action. I am moved to do things which tend to realize and strengthen this aspect of my character. Thus it can be argued that the mirror view does provide for and explain the direction of the self by the other that we claim is a constitutive feature of companion friendship.

It is hard to believe, though, that when I become interested in the ballet on account of my friend's interest, I am seeing for the first time an

18. John Cooper, "Aristotle on Friendship," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 301–40, pp. 322–23.

interest in ballet that I always had. Surely it is more likely that I simply was never interested in the ballet. Now perhaps the reply would be that I didn't know that I had the capacity to be interested in ballet until now when upon studying my friend's interests I see that I do. In this way then, to use Cooper's terminology, the character I intuitively know to be mine in the friend does direct and interpret me such that I am changed from how I was prior to the relationship with the mirror-friend.

On our view, though, this would still give a mistaken characterization of the phenomenology of direction and interpretation in friendship. For it is also possible that though I may be happy to go to the ballet with my friend I do not develop any independent interest in, or capacity to appreciate, the ballet itself. It is not that I now have a more accurate objective depiction of some feature or capacity that I had all along. Rather, my interest in and reasons for going to the ballet might just be a relational feature of my friendship with Iris. Without her I may have no reason for going at all.¹⁹ But beyond this disagreement about the relational characterization there is a second and perhaps more straightforward problem with Cooper's presentation. The problem is this: Why should we place any special stock, with respect to how friendship contributes to our view of ourselves, in the possibility that self-awareness may come from the friend's objective presentation of similarity? It seems at least as plausible to suppose that one might gain self-awareness from the friend's objective presentation of dissimilarity to oneself. So it could be through the objective presentation that my friend provides of what it is to be a cautious person that I come to see how reckless I really am. In other words, if there is anything at all in the idea of how a friend's objective presentation of character increases self-awareness, and by so doing further develops one's character, it can't crucially depend on the presentation of similarity, for clearly an objective contrast can be as illuminating to one's picture of oneself as an objective likeness.

And neither does it seem to us that the kind of self-awareness and character development that goes on in companion friendship is fully accounted for by our gaining access, through the friend, to an objective presentation of some existing or latent trait in our character. Such presentations can indeed have an impact on the way we see ourselves, but the capacity of a purely objective presentation to change us is limited. When I look in the mirror I get for the thousandth time an objective presentation of the size and shape of my nose. But my friend tells me that my nose is cute, or commanding, or aristocratic, or reminds her of Karl Malden, and this can be much more powerful than the mirror image in shaping the way I think about my nose, and myself. The evaluative,

19. I can imagine that if Iris moves away, or we cease to be friends, I will have no interest in renewing my subscription to the ballet.

creative content in the interpretations offered by my friend makes them dynamic; they will often change the way I view myself and the way in which some character trait of mine is realized, even when the trait in question is already well known to me. John might be well aware of his predilection for being right before he is led to change his view of himself by Judy's interpretation of this trait as endearing. The objective presentation version of the mirror view only allows that I might reinterpret myself in the light of the more accurate view of me that I gain through my friend. It attributes a passive role to the friend and does not give any role to my friend's interpretation of me in the development of my character and self-awareness.²⁰

Perhaps, though, Nancy Sherman's account of the life of Aristotle's virtuous person as a relational one does allow for a degree of drawing of the other in friendship in a way different from or additional to Cooper's objective presentation account. Sherman argues that, for Aristotle, friends "are not mere look-alikes of one another." Friends "bear varying degrees of similarity to each other" and will realize in each other the virtue they possess in varying degrees: "Each is inspired to develop himself more completely as he sees admirable qualities, not fully realized in himself, manifest in another whom he esteems . . . Character friends, as extended yet different selves, are eminently suited as models to be emulated."²¹ On this role model account, friends do not just provide a more objective view of who we are (although Sherman also endorses this view and its claim to provide a path to self-knowledge), they provide us with a view of how we should be. They present to us a more ideal self. A friend therefore is like an ideal mirror. Now it occurs to us, that as an ideal mirror, a friend might be able to provide more than just an image of what we should be. Such a friend, who possesses estimable traits that are different to those that I possess or at least are better developed than mine, might play a more active role involving interpretation of my strengths and weaknesses. In this event, I would be drawn, not just by my interpretation of myself in light of the image of how I should be, but by my friend's interpretation

20. It might be objected that an objective presentation of one by another need not be a mere accurate reflection but might involve significant interpretation of oneself by the other. So, e.g., one's therapist or a fellow philosopher assessing one's work may provide interpretations that are objective, and yet such interpretations may be very influential in how they affect one's character. We agree. Our claim is that an acceptance of direction and interpretation by another is a constitutive feature of friendship and not that the drawing process as such is unique to, or a sufficient condition of, friendship. It should not be a problem for our view, then, that there are other relationships, which, like friendship, involve an acceptance of some kind of drawing by another. Nevertheless, the drawing that goes on in friendship is distinct in kind and our discussion in a later section of the importance of governing conditions in defining the nature of different relationships should help show this.

21. Sherman, pp. 105–6.

of me. Maybe this reading of an ideal mirror view provides the active role of the friend that was absent in the objective mirror view.

We think there are two mistakes in this view. First, even if this ideal mirror view allows for some active interpretation by the friend, it does not seem an essential feature of friendship that this will have the result that one becomes more like one's friend. Indeed, as pointed out above, such interpretation may very well serve to confirm and sharpen those features in respect of which we are different.²² So even if the interpretation was of the right sort, and given that the ideal mirror view might not be so vulnerable to an attack from the unimportance of antecedent similarity to the development of friendship, it nevertheless misrepresents the role which dissimilarity commonly plays in friendship by focusing on just one way in which the different selves might relate and converge.

Second, and quite apart from the similarity/dissimilarity question, it seems clear that this ideal mirror view does not provide the right sort of interpretation for friendship. For the idea that it is in any way constitutive of friendship that the friend provides a positive role model for one to emulate seems clearly false. The drawing that takes place in friendship need have nothing to do with character improvement, as parents despairing over their adolescent children's friendships will readily attest. To suppose that it must, is to adopt a highly moralized notion of friendship which is at odds with ordinary experience. For the concern for self-improvement just seems altogether irrelevant to the nature of the interest that friends have in each other and in their shared activities. A person is hardly governed by the concern to improve herself when she engages in a regular card game or dinner date with friends.

Let us then move on to examine a more recent view that promises a more plausible explanation of the intimacy and particularity of friendship. We call this the "secrets view" because of the prominent role it gives to self-disclosure of private information in the establishment and maintenance of intimate friendship.

THE SECRETS VIEW OF FRIENDSHIP

Laurence Thomas claims that one of the distinguishing marks of friendship is the bond of mutual trust between friends.²³ This he thinks "is

22. In fact, Sherman concludes her article by claiming not only that "contrasting oneself with another" is a way to self-knowledge and must be a part of friendship but that this is in tune with Aristotle's view. We have already indicated how contrast in friendship might provide one with some self-awareness. Moreover, we have indicated how difference might be accommodated by an idealized mirror view and provide a kind of direction and interpretation. It is hard to see, however, how the idea that differences might be sharpened and confirmed in friendship could be accommodated within a mirror-type view, and Sherman offers no suggestions on this score. The evidence she provides for the claim that this was Aristotle's view of friendship is slight.

23. Laurence Thomas, "Friendship," *Synthese* 72 (1987): 217-36.

cemented by equal self-disclosure and for that very reason, is a sign of the very special regard which each has for the other.” The idea, he says, “of deep friends not confiding in one another seems almost unthinkable.”²⁴ But what precisely is meant by self-disclosure here and what role does Thomas think that self-disclosure has to play in companion friendship?

Thomas distinguishes between public information about our lives which any observant person could obtain and private or intimate information, a significant aspect of which is information about our motives. The sharing of information about ourselves that we are not willing to share with most others is the way in which we convey our intimate trust in each other. In fact, Thomas says, “there can be no deep friendship if we cannot convey this.”²⁵ The disclosure of secrets, therefore, is of the utmost importance in friendship; indeed, Thomas goes so far as to suggest that those who are public about virtually everything in their lives have disqualified themselves from friendship since they are without the resources necessary for conveying trust and establishing intimacy.

How does Thomas think self-disclosure works to convey trust and establish the intimacy of friendship? First, in giving another access to our secrets we make ourselves vulnerable to them in a way in which we are not vulnerable to those not in possession of our secrets. The fact that we choose to make ourselves vulnerable to them is a clear indication of particular regard and trust. Second, in revealing ourselves to another, and so giving them deep insight into our character and personality, we place them in a privileged position to comment on our lives and contribute to our flourishing. Merely showing a preference for someone’s company or a disposition to seek and accept their advice above the advice of others will not be sufficient to convey intimate trust, according to Thomas. If our friend does not have the privileged perspective on our lives that is gained by being privy to our secrets, then our reason for accepting his advice above others could only be that we thought that his advice was sounder; it could have nothing to do with the friendship and so says Thomas, “could hardly serve as an indication to him of the depth of our regard for him.”²⁶

Now there is something very plausible about the idea that companion friends have a commanding or privileged perspective on each other’s lives. But still we may legitimately wonder how much the gaining of such a perspective has to do with the reciprocal disclosure of private information that is not available to others. And we may also question whether the intimacy that is characteristic of close friendship is founded upon self-disclosure understood in this way. It is not immediately obvious that

24. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

26. *Ibid.*

one whose life is an open book cannot enter into and maintain intimate friendships or that those friends could not have a commanding perspective on her life.

Jeffrey Reiman takes issue with the secrets view on this point. On the secrets view, says Reiman, "The reality of my intimacy with you is constituted not simply by the quality and intensity of what we share, but by its unavailability to others."²⁷ But, he argues, the exchange of private information between two people does not, of itself, mark their relationship as intimate. Two psychoanalysts who analyze each other have access to information about the other which is unavailable to others, but it is plain enough that they are not friends, for it is the context of and motivation for the exchange of confidences that matters in the establishment of intimacy, not the private nature of what is exchanged. It is the context of caring which Reiman thinks gives the sharing of confidences significance in friendship.

We think that Reiman is right to point out, against the secrets view, that it is the context of a particular kind of caring which constitutes the intimacy shared between companion friends. However, this is but a first step in showing what goes wrong in the secrets view. Any plausible view on friendship recognizes that caring and affection is characteristic of friendship. The case of the two analysts merely shows that the sharing of secrets cannot itself be a sufficient condition of friendship. Now Thomas would surely concede this. He could still claim, however, that it was a necessary condition, or at least an important mark, of friendship. But in our view the sharing of secrets is not itself significant to friendship.

It is entirely plausible to suppose that close friends have an interest in understanding each other well. As Reiman notes, how the other experiences things, how they feel to her, matters deeply to the friend. As he says, it is in "the context of a reciprocal desire to share present and future intense and important experiences, [that] the revealing of personal information takes on significance. The more one knows about the other, the more one is able to understand how the other experiences things, what they mean to him, how they feel to him."²⁸ The development of one's understanding of a friend is plausibly linked to such things as gaining an understanding of what the friend values or cares about, how the friend sees things, and the nature of their interests in life. However, each of these features of a person bears, at best, a contingent relation to a person's secrets. My close friend will know well how much I care about my children, the nature of my interest in the movies and in cars,

27. Jeffrey H. Reiman, "Privacy, Intimacy and Personhood," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26 (1976): 26–44, p. 32. Reiman also attacks the secrets view in a directly value-laden way, claiming that it suggests a "distasteful . . . market conception of personal intimacy . . . the value and substance of intimacy—like the value and substance of my income—lies not merely in what I have but essentially in what others do *not* have."

28. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the kinds of things that make me laugh and that make me angry.²⁹ The sharing of these sorts of things, the revealing of myself in these ways, may well, as Reiman says, develop and deepen our friendship. It gives companion friends, as Thomas suggests, a commanding perspective on each others' lives. But it is not the shared secrets nor is it personal information per se that provides this commanding perspective. It is the fact that I choose to share what I value with you.

It would be ludicrous to suppose of many of the things that I hold private, that it would provide the commanding perspective of close friendship, were I to reveal them to another. I regard, for example, my morning bathroom routine as fairly private. And if I had a choice between exposing my private sexual activities to friends or to strangers I may very likely choose to reveal them to strangers. This might be because I believe I have something to be ashamed of that would lead those I most care about to think ill of me. The practice of confessing our shameful secrets to strangers or professionals (such as to priests, psychologists, or chance companions in bars or on planes) rather than to friends might be crucially motivated by our concern that such revelations would serve to alienate rather than increase intimacy. But most commonly, I will have nothing to be ashamed of in this regard and will simply be embarrassed at the thought of revealing these personal details to my friends. Again, though, my embarrassment could serve to alienate rather than increase intimacy between us.

At this point exponents of the secrets view of friendship will surely protest that it is not their claim that just *any* piece of private information will serve to deepen or nurture intimacy. They would not claim, for example, that the information that I pick my teeth in private could have a role to play in the development of my close friendships. However, they might say that the sharing of certain kinds of private information surely does serve to deepen or nurture intimacy; that is, the information which is, in Thomas's words, "deeply revelatory." The fact that I choose to tell you, my close friend, of my partner's infidelity and the consequent strain on my marriage or of my hopes of promotion might well serve to deepen or nurture intimacy. Indeed it would be bizarre to imagine that the clos-

29. It has been suggested to us by one of the editors that we have given the secrets view short shrift for it is the knowledge given by self-disclosure (which need not be intentional self-disclosure) that is essential to friendship, and it is this which represents the kernel of truth in the secrets view. It should be clear from our discussion that we do not deny the importance of knowledge of the other in friendship—indeed it is essential to the interpretive process—but rather we deny the importance of privileged knowledge obtained through secret sharing. It is an interesting further issue as to exactly what kind of knowledge is essential to friendship. An editor of *Ethics* has put to us that all that might be required is that the affection friends have for each other is not entirely based on false beliefs and is counterfactually stable in worlds where the friends acquire more accurate knowledge. As we indicate above, our requirements are a little stronger, since we think it important that close friends do have some understanding of what each other values and cares about.

est of friends would not share *any* of these private concerns with each other.

We agree that it would be unusual if the closest of friends did not share any such private concerns.³⁰ Further, we agree that the sharing of such concerns can serve to deepen and nurture intimacy. But, as the imagined selectivity of Thomas makes plain, it is not the private nature of what is disclosed that counts toward intimacy. Rather, it is the value we assign to the hopes and concerns we share with each other (whether we wish them to be kept private or not) and the fact that we choose to talk to each other about what matters to us that contributes to the growth of intimacy between us. Thus, as my friend, you do indeed gain what Thomas calls “a commanding perspective” on my life but access to my secrets need play very little part in this.

In looking further into how the secrets view goes wrong we have seen that it is not the sharing of private information nor even of very personal information, as such, that contributes to the bonds of trust and intimacy between companion friends. At best it is the sharing of what friends care about that is relevant here. But even this does not satisfactorily describe the intimacy of close friendship. For what we value and how we choose to share what we value is also in part determined in and by our friendships. And our drawing account helpfully explains this. That we are distinctively disposed to engage in each other’s activities and to be responsive to the way the other thinks and feels about things sheds light on how the shared valuing that goes on in friendship, and the intimacy that comes with this, are guided and shaped within friendship.

In order to develop this claim, we now turn the focus toward a more direct discussion of our view. In the next section we argue that the willingness to engage in mutual direction and interpretation does govern relations of friendship in a way that similarity or secret sharing cannot.

THE GOVERNING CONDITIONS OF FRIENDSHIP

If we are to claim that our view says something important about the nature of friendship and the role of the self within it, we need to show how our view can help distinguish friendship from other types of relationships. It will be helpful therefore to have at hand a method by which to identify the salient features of different kinds of relationships. The method that we will employ focuses on certain conditions under which different kinds of relationships are entered into and developed, and certain conditions which lead to the ending of these relationships. Call conditions of the first sort ‘acceptance’ conditions of a relationship and conditions of the second sort the ‘terminating’ conditions of a relation-

30. However, there does not seem to be any single piece of private information (not directly concerning the friend) that one must share with one’s friends or else forfeit the claim that they are indeed one’s friend.

ship.³¹ Looking at how such conditions can govern different sorts of relationships will help in the identification and the contrasting of these relationships.³² Thus, while it is an acceptance condition of friendship that I like the other, this is not an acceptance condition of a relationship as teacher of another. Similarly, while I would not terminate a pedagogical relationship because I don't like a particular student very much, or even at all, it would be appropriate to terminate a friendship in such circumstances. Focusing on the governing conditions of friendship provides a straightforward way to distinguish the drawing view of friendship from the secrets and mirror accounts, to show why certain relations aren't relations of friendship, to explain why some people can't have friendships, and to test the view against possible counterexamples.

Acceptance Conditions

We argue that it is a significant and distinctive constitutive feature of companion friendship that friends are responsive to the direction and interpretation of one another. Therefore, on this view, reciprocal direction and interpretation with another, (in part) governs my friendship with them. So it is an acceptance condition of the friendship relation that I am prepared to engage in such direction and interpretation with the other. What reason is there to accept this claim?

One kind of person who seems clearly incapable of close friendship is the person who is excessively rigid. In *Autonomy and Rigid Character*, David Shapiro gives an extensive and insightful account of the rigid personality.³³ We cannot do justice here to this account, but it is clear from it that psychological rigidity would leave a person unfit for close friendship. To take just one of Shapiro's observations:

The fixed purposiveness of the rigid person narrows his interest in the world and restricts and prejudices his experience of it. He looks only for data—or, in the paranoid case, for clues—relevant to his purposes or concerns. The compulsive man who examines each woman with a checklist in mind of certain qualifications for mar-

31. For more on the importance of these governing conditions in helping to identify different kinds of relationships, see Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley, "Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation," *Ethics* 106 (1995): 86–111.

32. Of course, there may be all sorts of conditions relevant to why a person either enters into or terminates a certain relationship which would not plausibly also count as conditions which govern that relationship. So, e.g., our being thrown into a dangerous situation together may have been crucial to our becoming friends, but continuing danger is not crucial to our remaining friends. And I may initially be attracted by your green eyes or your similarity to me without these things being important in our ongoing relationship. There are, however, acceptance and terminating conditions, such as those we mention above, which do importantly govern different sorts of relationships and which shed light on the differences between them. We thank an editor of *Ethics* for pointing to some possible confusion on this point.

33. David Shapiro, *Autonomy and Rigid Character* (New York: Basic, 1981).

riage does not see that woman objectively; he sees a selection of traits and features whose sum is not a person but a high or a low score. This is a kind of . . . awareness that is not open and attentive to the world but is restricted and prejudiced by the necessity to satisfy pre-established requirements and fixed purposes.³⁴

This description of rigidity reveals a narrow self unable to engage with the world and with others. It seems fairly uncontroversial that such a person could not have close friends. How might the different views of the self in friendship understand this incapacity?

The mirror and secrets views can have little to offer here. First, there seems no obvious reason why a rigid person could not engage in secret sharing or see herself reflected in another. As a rigid person I have a narrow view, I am inflexible, and I am not open to change by others or the world but I might still share secrets or be attracted by similarity in another—such similarity might well determine the items on my checklist. Second, even if it turned out that the rigid person could not engage in secret sharing or attachment based on similarity, the rigid person's failure here does not feature in the psychological description of rigidity and does not seem in any way fundamental to an explanation of why the rigid person cannot have close friends. A failure to engage in attachment based on similarity seems simply irrelevant to these explanations, and while it might be objected on behalf of the secrets view that the rigid person's limited attentiveness to others would mean that she is not a good listener to the secrets of others, this is not obviously the case. Thus, neither the secrets view nor the mirror view offers us any instruction as to why the rigid self is unfit for friendship.

It does seem clear, however, that an important reason why the rigid person could not have close friends is precisely that she is not open to being directed and interpreted by others and could have only a very limited capacity to engage in the drawing process herself.³⁵ Since such openness is, on the drawing view, an acceptance condition of close friendship, the psychological account of rigid personality tends to support this view.³⁶

34. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

35. The painfully shy person is another character type who has difficulty in establishing friendships. Here it might not be quite right to say that the painfully shy person is not open to the drawing process. Rather, she seems to lack the self-confidence to engage in it.

36. We are suggesting here that these considerations provide support for our account but not for the secrets or mirror views. We are not claiming that these considerations alone show that these other views fail as accounts of what (in part) constitutes friendship. For it could be argued that the only support given to our view here is that it may characterize certain consequences of some other common constitutive features of close friendship. As a referee has similarly pointed out to us, the process of mutual drawing might not itself be constitutive but only an accidental effect of whatever is constitutive of close friendship. We think, in fact, that the process of mutual drawing is not only a constitutive feature of close friendship but also does characterize certain consequences of other constitutive features. So, e.g., it may be a consequence of the disposition to act for the other's sake in friendship

Terminating Conditions

According to the drawing view, it is a terminating condition of friendship that the individuals involved can no longer accept or engage in direction and interpretation with one another. How does this shed light on what occurs, at least commonly, when friends grow apart?

Often we say of our own lost friendships that we had nothing (or at least nothing significant) in common with the friend any more, and often we take this to provide a sufficient explanation of the breakdown of the friendship. Now these commonsense understandings of what happens when friends grow apart would appear to give some support to the mirror view. After all, if the development of dissimilarity can explain the growing apart then surely, it might be said, similarity is the important constituent of continuing friendship.

But it cannot be simply that my friend has changed and so has become dissimilar, either to me or to how she was. We have already indicated that dissimilarity is not in itself a bar to friendship or to the mutual creation of common ground. Companion friendships can persist over long stretches of time through quite radical change within each person. Equally, they may falter despite our continuing or even increased similarity. If this is right, similarity cannot be the key to a continuing friendship.

Think of a long-term friendship where the friends have changed. Attila and Dave met as students, they shared a house together, and they developed a social life of student plays, politics, and visits to pubs. Not surprisingly, fifteen years later they each engage in new activities, they have different careers, and their tastes and preferences and family circumstances have changed. But while their friendship might be very different from how it was, these friends have not grown apart. Dave is still disposed to be directed by Attila's interest when, instead of asking if Dave would like to go out to see a band or join in an all-night card game, Attila asks if he would like to try a round of golf. And Dave's self-image is still influenced and enriched by Attila's interpretations of him, though now Attila jokes about Dave's parental anxiety rather than about his intensity about politics. These friends remain responsive to each other. However, it seems just the right thing to say, of those old friends whose interpretations of me I can no longer accept, that we have grown apart.

It might be, for example, that I have become so obsessed in my work

that friends engage in some mutual drawing. However, the secrets and mirror views do not provide an adequate characterization of the consequences of other common constitutive features such as mutual interest, affection, and the desire to share experiences. As we have argued, such features seem neither constitutively constrained by, nor vitally expressed through, requirements of similarity or secret sharing. The objection might still be pressed, however, that we have not provided any argument here for thinking that mutual drawing is any more than a consequence of these other constitutive features. We consider this objection below.

that I can no longer accept Judy's lighthearted interpretation of my self-importance, or she has become so caught up in her New Age psychology that what was once my tactile warmth is now my invasion of her space, or what was my endearing reserve is now my deep-seated repression. At least one of us has changed, it is true, but it is not the fact or even the direction of change that is significant here. Rather, it is that I feel that she no longer knows who I am. She is not interested in *me*; her interpretations are either insufficiently responsive to the changes in me, or are sensitive, not to me, but to her political or religious beliefs or to suggestions from third parties.³⁷ Similarly, my revised interpretations of the other might present her as someone who is beyond any influence from me, or from whom I am no longer willing to accept interpretation and direction. Thus, she and I can no longer be considered companion friends, though it need not be the case that we are now less similar than we were, and it need not be the case that any failure to share secrets was responsible for our drifting apart.³⁸ Growing dissimilarity and a failure to share secrets may be features (or outcomes) of our drifting apart, but they do not essentially characterize the drifting apart. The terminating condition suggested by our account does helpfully explain when and why friendships break down.³⁹

37. Many people have had friendships fade because their friend's interpretation of them has become too fixed. This rigidity of interpretation may not threaten familial relationships which are, as Thomas points out, more structured and role governed than friendship, but it is incompatible with close friendship.

38. On the similarity point: imagine that my friend becomes very ambitious like me. Her interpretation of my ambitiousness is no longer light-hearted, and I find her new similarity to me very confronting. It seems plausible to suppose that in these circumstances we would drift apart. On the secrets point: perhaps a failure to share secrets would lead to or compound the failures of interpretation, but we think it is more plausible to suppose that such failures would have an impact on the disposition to share one's secrets.

39. We can think of two ways in which the advocate of a similarity view might quite plausibly insist that similarity governs friendship. First, she might say that it is necessary that a friend does not engage in activities that would violate one's most important values. For example, it may be necessary that they do not become an active racist. Second, she might say that it is a requirement of friendship that the friend shares some abstract conception of the good. So while they need not share our particular interests, say in ballet, they must nevertheless have an abstract appreciation of such goods as joy, beauty, and knowledge. We can agree with both of these claims. Both, however, are at best trivially true. The first caveat would not apply distinctively to friendship. We would not want to work with or live next door to the Ku Klux Klansman. And the second would seem to capture almost everyone. While we differ a lot in terms of particular interests almost everyone shares an appreciation of such abstract goods as joy. In any case our view shows why such similarity (albeit trivial) might be required. For most of us would not be prepared to be directed by the interests of the extreme racist or by someone altogether lacking an abstract conception of the good. Of course, some individuals may require more in the way of evaluative similarity in their friends than this broad level of agreement. But the more that is demanded here the more such an individual comes to resemble the rigid person who is incapable of friendship. We thank Dirk Baltzly for discussion of this point.

Problem Cases

In considering possible counterexamples to our account, two kinds of problem case for our view suggest themselves: first, cases where there seems to be direction and interpretation of the other but the relationship is clearly not one of friendship; second, where there is no direction and interpretation of the other but the relationship is allegedly one of friendship.

Case 1: direction and interpretation in relationships which are not friendships.—It should be evident that interpretation of the other is not exclusive to relations of friendship. Our self-image is influenced by the interpretations made of us by our bosses and colleagues, our parents, our teachers or priests or therapists. How is friendship, in particular, characterized by interpretation? It might be argued that the two analysts in Reiman's counterexample to the secrets view can just as well be used as a counterexample against our account of companion friendship. For just as the two analysts might engage in mutual disclosure of their deepest secrets, so they might engage in some significant direction and interpretation of each another. Perhaps one analyst might suggest to the other that she ought to lighten up on her trait of always wanting to be right, or that she ought to get out more often, perhaps go to the ballet. However, the disposition of each analyst to be drawn by the other applies just in virtue of their professional expertise. So, if one is disposed to lighten up on the advice of the other, then this is to be explained by her respect for the other's expertise as a psychoanalyst.⁴⁰ The direction and interpretation that occurs in friendship is distinct in kind. In the therapeutic relationship my acceptance of direction would not mark my developing friendship with the therapist but, rather, my belief that such direction is good for me and will help my recovery. Direction and interpretation in therapeutic relationships is characterized by the end of restoring the patient's health. Once this end has been achieved it is appropriate to end the relationship. No such terminating condition applies in friendship. The direction and interpretation in friendship is not undertaken with any particular end in sight, let alone the end of psychological health.⁴¹

40. Similarly, Thomas argues that friendship is to be distinguished from such role governed relationships as that of teacher and student, or psychiatrist and patient, in that it is a minimally structured relationship. We agree with Thomas that friendship is not as convention bound as many other sorts of relations: at issue is which view of friendship provides appropriate governing conditions for friendship.

41. A referee has suggested we are claiming that friendship is distinguished by an open-ended or unlimited interest in the drawing of the friend. However, to say that the drawing involved in the friendship case is not undertaken with any particular end in sight is not to suggest an open-ended or unlimited receptivity to drawing. As we go on to say below, one may well not be willing to be drawn by a close friend in various ways. Complete disinterest in, or dislike of, the ballet might mean that I will not be directed to go by Iris's

Case 2: alleged friendships not involving direction and interpretation.—The kind of counterexample we have in mind here would describe a relationship where the constitutive conditions of friendship that are common to, or in the background of, the rival views of friendship are met, but where there is no significant drawing of the sort we have claimed. In such a relationship, then, the two parties would be bound by a strong affection for one another, they would be highly disposed to promote the other's interests and well-being, and they would have a strong desire for shared experiences. They are not, however, to any significant extent, disposed to be directed by the other's interests where they otherwise would not be, nor to accept the other's interpretations or engage in interpretations of the other. How then might we picture such characters? The likely candidate for the sort of person who would not be directed by another or take on the interpretations of them by another is someone who is highly self-determining and self-contained—someone whose reasons for action and whose identity comes almost wholly from within and not from those to whom they are intimately attached.

Now obviously, the characterization of this kind of counterexample cannot be too extreme or the relationship could not meet the background conditions of friendship. To be a candidate case for friendship the parties must, for example, be disposed to promote the other's interests. It just cannot be the case, then, that the person's identity and reasons for action where the friend is concerned are altogether undetermined by the friend's direction or the person's interpretation of their friend. Some direction and interpretation is obviously necessary if the person is to have any idea of what the other's interest is. Similarly, this seems true of the other background conditions of friendship. How could the parties be bonded by strong ties of affection and have the desire for shared experiences if they had no, or at least very little, interpretation of the other for whom they felt this great affection and desire for shared experiences?

Now perhaps this much could be conceded. But the force of this kind of counterexample could be that while some direction and interpretation must characterize these background conditions of friendship in order for these conditions to be met at all, we have overstated the extent of, or mischaracterized the kind of, direction and interpretation that goes on in close friendships. In particular, the objection might be that we have not provided reason to accept the constitutive claim for the mutual drawing process that goes on in friendship.

In reply, let us focus on the direction case. Being close friends with another does not mean that you will be disposed to be directed by their interests in a wholesale fashion. Apart from the possibility of the friend

interest in it. The difference between the drawing involved in friendship and that involved in a professional relationship is that in the former but not the latter case I may be directed to, say, go to the ballet just because it is Iris's interest and not because I think Iris is a good judge of how I might improve my psychological health.

having immoral, idiotic, or dangerous interests that you would not be prepared to share, you might also just not be prepared, for instance, to go to the ballet with Iris. Indeed, it is surely a part of most, if not all, friendships, that each party has some interests that the other will simply never have an interest in sharing. It would be an unrealistic, romanticized view to expect otherwise. But imagine a close friend who would not only never go to the ballet with you, but would not go to the movies, or for a Sunday drive, or to the beach, or to dinner, and so on—unless you were in need of help, or it would promote your serious interests for them to do so, or that they were already, for their own reasons unconnected to you, disposed to engage in the activity. Surely it is hard to think of this person as a close friend, as someone who is deeply attached to you, when the fact that you are their friend does not directly give them a reason to act where you are concerned and so does not contribute to who they are.⁴² In such cases, the right thing to say seems precisely to be that you are not very close friends.

It has been put to us that it is plausible to imagine a close friendship where, contrary to our claim, the friends are not disposed to be directed by the interests of the other. The case in point is where the background conditions of friendship are met but the friends engage in mutual activities solely on the basis of their independent preexisting interests. These friends are, as it happens, remarkably similar in their interests. So whenever Chris suggests some mutual activity to Bob, Bob will be disposed to participate, not in virtue of a disposition to be directed by Chris, but in virtue of his own inclination toward the activity. Now, given the bonds of mutual affection and so forth between Chris and Bob, surely they are close friends. Yet since Chris and Bob are not in fact directed by each other's interests our account could not recognize their friendship. In reply, we think that in assessing whether these two *are* close friends it is important to look at the counterfactuals. Specifically, would Chris and Bob be disposed to be directed by each other in worlds where their interests diverge? The assumption that they would, we believe, lies behind much of the intuitive appeal of this example. For imagine that Chris were to learn that, with respect to Bob's desire to share experiences with her, it is solely a matter of similar interest that leads Bob to accept her suggestions for shared activities; that it is never at all on account of an interest in X being *her* interest that Bob is directed to engage in X rather than Y. So where Chris's interest in X did diverge from Bob's, her interest would

42. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet argues that friendship does provide us with reasons in the way we have suggested: "You appear to me Mr. Darcy to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection. A regard for the requester would often make one yield readily to a request, without waiting for arguments to reason one into it. . . . In general and ordinary cases of friendship, where one is desired by the other to change a resolution of no very great moment, should you think ill of the person for complying with the desire, without waiting to be argued into it?" (p. 43).

have no action guiding force for Bob. In this case Chris would surely feel alienated from Bob and that, against appearances, Bob is not really her close friend. After all her interests never, of themselves, provide reasons for him.⁴³

Second, consider the interpretation case. Our reply here takes much the same tack. We allow that close friends need not accept the other's interpretation of them wholesale, and, of course, close friends need not be perennially or even very often engaged in the activity. But imagine if I had no interpretations of you to offer and so no contribution to make to who you are, beyond the sort of understandings necessary to promote your serious interest or beyond those I might make and offer of persons as such. And, conversely, imagine that I would not accept or be changed by your interpretations of me beyond those of any other person, and so that you could not contribute to who *I* am. Again, surely the right thing to say, just is, that we are not, after all, close friends.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Recent debates over whether or not impartialist ethics can accommodate friendship have focused on how our attachment to our friends not only gives us reasons for action but makes an important contribution to who we are. The fact that, for example, Judy is my close friend both informs my reasons for acting where she is concerned and contributes to the sort of person I am. That friendship is like this and is valuable in these ways appears to be widely accepted by writers concerned to show how an impartialist ethic can accommodate our attachment to close friends and by

43. We thank Michael Smith for his vigorous presentation of this kind of objection. For more extensive discussion on the problem of alienation in friendship, see Michael Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 453–66; Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13 (1984): 134–71; and Cocking and Oakley.

44. James McLaren has suggested in conversation with us that among actors, where intensive mutual interpretation is a professional commonplace, it is considered bad form to engage in mutual interpretations in one's friendships. It is a bit like bringing one's work home. (A similar situation might confront analysts in their private lives.) Are such cases, then, counterexamples to our view: Are these close friendships without mutual interpretation? We do not think that they are. First, it is not clear that the interpretations that are considered bad form include *any* interpretations or just those that are filtered through the prism of the professional expertise in question. Second, it is not clear that these are close friendships or at least that the closeness and intimacy of the friendship isn't adversely affected by the absence of interpretation. If the problem is that the individuals concerned are disposed to offer interpretations imported from their professional framework, then it is not hard to imagine that this would be alienating. If the problem is that on account of their intensive engagement in professional interpretation all kinds of interpretation are burdensome, then again it is not hard to imagine that, to this extent, the depth of one's involvement with one's friends suffers. Moreover, it might not just be interpretation that suffers here. An actor's emotional engagement with a part might leave them with little interest in shared activities or expressions of affection with their friends.

those who argue that it cannot. We have argued that a direction and interpretation account of one's attachment to a friend identifies a constitutive feature of close friendship as well as significantly characterizing both the desire that friends have for shared experiences and the nature of the interest one has in a friend. We have argued for this claim directly by showing both how it fits the friendship case and how it helps explain why other sorts of relationships are not friendships. We have also argued against the most common competing accounts which make similar claims to identify a constitutive feature of the relation between close friends. If our direction and interpretation account, therefore, does provide an appropriate characterization of the nature of attachment and intimacy in friendship, it will have shed some light on the way in which friendship contributes to one's identity and gives rise to reasons not shared by others. I am (partly) determined by the friend's interpretation of me and I have reasons to act that are directed by her interest. Hopefully, then, our account of the nature of friendship will be of some interest and use both to those concerned to champion the value of friendship and those concerned to accommodate it.⁴⁵

45. That a friend contributes to one's identity and presents a reason for one to be moved to pursue shared activities in this way seems just the sort of thing that various writers have had in mind in making and responding to the objection that our foremost moral theories alienate us from ourselves and our friends. See, e.g., Bernard Williams on having one thought too many, in "Persons, Character, and Morality," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and for a Kantian response see Barbara Herman, "Agency, Attachment, and Difference," *Ethics* 101 (1991): 775–97, esp. pp. 780–83. See also n. 43. Again, our account of the nature of friendship not only fits well with, but helps explain the value of, friendship assumed in these discussions. By contrast, the mirror view makes it hard to see why friendship would be thought valuable at all, let alone valuable in a way which might compete with morality. We hope to expand on this issue elsewhere.