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AGAINST EPISTEMIC PARTIALITY IN FRIENDSHIP

Master Thesis

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I confirm that I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All the other authors' text, main viewpoints and all data from other sources have been duly acknowledged.

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## INTRODUCTION

The common assumption held by Stroud (2006) and her critics; Kawal(2012), Hawley(2012) and Goldberg(2018) is that some esteem or thinking well of one another is a precondition for friendship. This feature of friendship makes you epistemically irresponsible. But one is quick to ask whether this feature of friendship requires epistemic bias? This thesis aims to provide the answer to this question.

I will argue that if friendship is based on the character and esteem for your friend. Epistemic partiality undermines this character. Therefore, epistemic bias undermines friendship. My aim is to demonstrate that a good friend ought to hold his friend in high esteem for good reason(s). Therefore, doxastic bias ought to be rejected in character-friendship. Not only that a good person ought to be a good believer but to say that a person is a good friend because he is biased in your favor is a bit absurd.

The thesis will be divided into four sections. In section one, I will consider the account of epistemic partiality in friendship. In the first part of the argument, I will lay down the descriptive part of the account as given by Stroud. I will examine the cognitive processes we engage in, and the conclusion we turn to draw out of these processes. My focus will also be primarily on the reasons for exhibiting partiality towards our friends. This account predicated prominently on an intuitive picture of our friends suggests that we deal differently with information concerning our friends than that which concern non-friends. This view focuses more on our beliefs in the character and esteem for our friends. According to this assumption, we become a friend to someone because we take the person to be a good person. This intuitive picture among friends gives the reasons why one ought to protect this character. Not doing so makes you not a good friend. In the second part, I will examine the normative part of the argument. The suggestion is that we ought to exhibit epistemic partiality in friendship. Deep-seated is the predicament that when the norm of friendship conflict with epistemic norms, we must; (1) choose friendship over the epistemic norms and seek to revise the later and (2) do nothing because the two norms are perhaps incommensurable.

In part two of the thesis, I will examine the main objections to epistemic partiality in friendship. I will introduce three principal authors in my objection. I will show the common assumption that they all share and the point of divergence from my thesis. My focus will be whether they are successful as strong objections. I will examine the main weakness of these objections. This weakness as I see it is their tolerance of partiality in friendship, which I believe is objectionable in my account.

The third part of my thesis is my account, which for practical reasons, I prefer to call an instrumental argument of friendship. In this account, I reject the notion that epistemic partiality is needed to esteem our friend's character. I will present two defenses in support of my account. The first one is what I will call a vice argument. It says that doxastic bias is vice and undermines good character. Therefore, undermines friendship. Therefore, the idea that a good friend needs to shift his doxastic conduct to save his friend's character and hold him in high esteem does not add up. The second defense I will present is the primacy of existence argument. This argument states that deceptive doxastic attitude in favor of your friend does not alter the fact that he is a bad person. In that true friendship is limited to the good, because friendship is based on good character and presupposes it. I will then consider the alternative way we can get out of the dilemma Stroud has suggested without losing our grip of friendship. In this case, a good friend's epistemic conduct will not slant in a positive direction. Instead, a good friend will willingly accept negative information about his friend and help him overcome his flaws should he be in need. I will contend that doxastic bias is incompatible with the kind of friendship under consideration.

The fourth part of this paper will focus on a possible objection to my argument. The opposition I envisage in the future is that Stroud may worry and argue that I am tying friendship too closely to virtue. This may rule out an intuitively vital feature of a good friend which is responsiveness to their interests. In that, to be a good friend, one must become the kind for whom the friend's concerns and interest become reasons for action. My account may sacrifice this vital feature Stroud might say. My objection is that shielding a flawed character with doxastic bias seem incompatible with excellent character. Also, flouting epistemic norms in the name of friendship does not seem like something in the line of good character. However, the motivation of the instrumental argument is not that of morality. Instead, that which take friendship as something which involves a commitment to take a friend's personal growth as prima-facie valuable, and so recognizes all traits in one's friend to help him be a better person. This, I believe epistemic partiality in friendship is blind to.

I conclude that epistemic partiality undermines friendship. In that, epistemic partiality is a vice and if cultivated, will breed more of its likeness in the friendship. Also, the doxastic bias in friendship does not change the reality that a person has acted badly. Instead, a good friend must be willing to accept the negative qualities of his friend. By so doing they each seek to help one another to grow in pursuit of their good lives.

## SECTION ONE

### 1.1 STROUD AND EPISTEMIC PARTIALITY IN FRIENDSHIP

#### 1.2 INTRODUCTION

According to the epistemic partiality in friendship argument, a good friend ought to be epistemically biased in favor of his friend. This bias usually occurs when it comes to dealing with information that concerns our friends<sup>1</sup>. The assumption held here is that a friend's epistemic behavior is an attempt to protect his friend's character and hold him in high esteem. What is presented to us seems to suggest that epistemic bias is required in friendship to validate a friend's esteem and show respect for his character. In this case, a good friend ought to form epistemically biased beliefs in favor of his friend when dealing with information concerning his friend<sup>2</sup>. It can be agreed that we exhibit some level of partiality when it comes to other close relations. For instance, a parent may overestimate the achievements of his child and often even be hesitant in believing or accepting negative information about his kid. However, I assume that a good parent will not be blatantly blind to the negative traits of his child. The question then is: What is it about friendship that gives it such power to infringe upon many norms being it moral or epistemic?<sup>3</sup> Stroud (2006) provides us with some features of friendship that justifies the behavior of a good friend. In this context, I will be using friendship strictly to mean about the same as Aristotle seems to have meant by perfect friendship or friendship of virtue. That means people who value each other intrinsically and wish well for each other. People who are friends based on the recognition of good character. This type he says is rare; since such virtuous people are few. This type he says is the best and fullest form of friendship.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I will be laying down the argument for epistemic partiality in friendship.

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this paper, 'information' is used to mean something that is presented to you as fact and what is the fact. I do not use it to mean factive.

<sup>2</sup> I do not use a good friend to suggest any normative goodness; instead, it merely refers to a person who is good and at the same time a friend. I admit that there come into mind many concepts and meaning when friendship is concerned. Different type of friendship evokes a different set of rules. Stroud (2006) treats friendship broadly, but on the other hand, assumes that friendship is based on character. This assumption quickly raises concerns. Mainly because there are many types of friendships which has nothing to do with character. However, these issues are not what interest me here. In this thesis, I take Stroud's assumption to be true and treat friendship as one that is founded on a character to stay faithful to the literature. Therefore, I appeal to the reader to understand that friendship in this context is character-based.

<sup>3</sup> Epistemic norms or norms of epistemology here is taken to include the standards promulgated by mainstream epistemology for epistemically justified belief and responsible belief-formation. See Stroud 2006, 522. I share the same view as Stroud on these norms.

<sup>4</sup> See Cooper (1977), pp 618-647.

### 1.3 THE ARGUMENT

The epistemic partiality in friendship argument can be labeled under two broad themes. The descriptive and the normative themes respectively.<sup>5</sup> On the descriptive part, I will describe what we usually do cognitively when our friends are concerned. The second part, which is the normative part of the argument, I will give the justification for the descriptive part and then provides the solutions to the dilemma between epistemic and friendship demands.

On the descriptive part of the argument, it is claimed that we usually engage in two broad differential epistemic practices in friendship. First and foremost, our mental activities change when processing information about our friends. We tend to give more time and energy to decrease the effects of the unfavorable information. The second thing we do is that where our friends are concerned, we arrive at different conclusions. What is more striking about our behavior is that we are likely to give an alternative and less damning explanation of the reported conduct greater credence than we would for a non-friend. Stroud describes the epistemic partiality by a good friend in favor of his friend as follows:

First, the good friend's reasons for adopting these differential epistemic practices seems to be just that the person in question is her friend. However, that someone is your friend is not itself an important epistemic reason to form different beliefs about him. So, we certainly have at least the appearance of bias, if bias is understood as merely as differential epistemic treatment without epistemic justification. Furthermore, rather than being truth-conducive, they seem to lead her into a distorted conception of reality. (Stroud,2006; 512-3)<sup>6</sup>

The reader should note that these are all activities of the mind. These cognitive activities can be summarized in this way. Stroud's claim is that intuitively, (1) we scrutinize with great effort negative claims about our friends (2) we usually draw different conclusions from what the evidence suggests when our friends are concerned (3) we extend in favor of our friends interpretative charity and lastly (4) the fact that they are our friends influence our deliberation of

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<sup>5</sup> Epistemic partiality is doxastic conduct that deviates (in a certain direction) from the standards promulgated by mainstream epistemology. Mainly without justification. These terms (epistemic or doxastic) are used interchangeably in this work concerning knowledge and beliefs.

<sup>6</sup> Stroud writes on a footnote that the good friend's doxastic shifts, namely, the set of beliefs she ends up with, his epistemic responses will also likely differ in terms of the degree of scrutiny to which he subjects this new information. What is true is that his set of beliefs about his friend will tend not to include conclusions which might seem natural to others. That is, one way in which her doxastic set is distinctive is that it is characterized by the absence of certain beliefs which other people would probably have formed. These are some of the violations Stroud asserts in the conduct of a good friend.

what to believe about them. These descriptions are assumed arguably to be what the demands of friendship are.

Why do we act like this towards our friends as I have described above? Two main reasons account for our actions. The first assumption is that; friendship is based on the character and esteem for our friends. This means that I accept you as my friend only because I take you to be a good person. Without this, there would not be a friendship in the first place. That is why one ought to protect that character and maintain the esteem of his friend to sustain and maintain the friendship.

Stroud's assumption is that,

“friendship is based on your friend's character and esteem for his merits. We need not mean narrowly moral character, or specifically moral merits, but at least some constraint is required in order to respond to the common intuition that we desire that our friends to love us as we are. On this conception of friendship, it makes sense that we need to maintain a favorable esteem of our friend's character" (Stroud 2006,511).

The differential epistemic practices of a good friend could not be accounted for if friendship were not based on taking your friend to be a good person. Stroud sees it that there would be nothing internal to motivate the biased action to cover up information that concerns our friend's character. Therefore, we should not be amazed that a good friend will be-laud his beliefs about his friend's character as described.

The second reason for the good friend's epistemic behavior is that friendship includes a kind of commitment. According to this, "our friendship determines our discussions, serving as a pivot by which we solve the problem with which we are presented" (Stroud 2006,511). Because friendship involves this level of commitment, one does not decide over again on any given issue of what to do. When I promise to visit you on Monday at 2 pm, I do not decide what to do anew on Monday at 2 pm for I have no other option than to fulfill my promise. Stroud asserts that should some other things come to demand my attention on Monday at 2 pm. I must rule out all other potential deliberation because whatever the merits of doing something other than visit my friend at 2 pm, my promise restricts my deliberative field. She writes as follows;

"To be a friend is to decide to share in his life. And this affects how you respond to new information about him. Your friend need not prove each day, from scratch, that he is a good person: friendship is not contingent on being continually renewed by objective proofs of that proposition. This mirror in your doxastic response toward your friend"(Stroud 2006;511).



These two reasons are the justification for good friend's irrational epistemic conduct.<sup>7</sup> On the normative part of the argument, a defense for epistemic partiality in friendship is given, and Stroud tells us what we ought to do. Here, we are told that the demands of friendship conflict with epistemic values. She pins down the problem on demand for impartiality. I will now consider the implications of the conflict between friendship and epistemic norms. The arguments which have been offered lead to the following conclusions: (1) Friendship demands epistemic bias if taken as an epistemically unjustified departure from epistemic objectivity. (2) Doxastic conducts which violate the standards of mainstream epistemology are a constitutive feature of friendship. The significance of friendship for a good life warrants that we have strong reasons for friendships. It then follows that (3) if obeying certain norm would preclude friendship, then we have good reasons not to live up those norms. (Stroud 2006,518). These outcomes are uncomfortable if we come to realize that the demands of friendship conflicts with the demands of epistemology. According to Stroud, they are so because friendship seems to be a necessary component of a good life. Considering our reasons for being in friendships, it seems that those other demands; no matter how much we cherish them must take the second place if they make friendship impossible. Given the present conflict at hand, how are we supposed to respond? In light of this, there are two leading solutions available. First, if the laws of epistemic rationality conflict with friendship, then one might say we should forget epistemic rationality. The reason is that if friendship constitutively involves epistemic irrationality and epistemic rationality prevents friendship; then we ought to choose epistemic irrationality. According to Stroud, "we have most reason overall to be epistemically irrational at least in the context of a friendship"(Stroud 2006,519). This response is a coherent one. There is nothing contradictory in the idea that we have the most reason overall to do something unacceptable from a certain evaluative standpoint. For Stroud, "if we concluded that the dispositions constitutive of friendship were incompatible with our moral ideals, one possible reaction would be, well, so much the worse for morality"(Stroud 2006,519). This type of response which is available in the moral domain can be applied in the epistemic domain as well. Secondly, there is another response, which also seems plausible in both moral and epistemic domains. It says that given the conflict that ensues between the two norms, there is no answer to the question. This is because there is what we ought to believe from an epistemic point of view and what we ought to believe as a friend. This response which can to termed dualism of practical

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<sup>7</sup> I use doxastic or epistemic conduct to cover the various methods and practices one brings to bear in forming, revising, and sustaining belief in the face of new information, as well as the beliefs that result from the use of such methods and practices

reason holds that the demands of friendship are incommensurable with those of epistemic rationality.

These two solutions are said to be the only way out of the predicament. In order to demonstrate that epistemic bias is the only way, Stroud digresses through moral theory to prove a similar response in the moral dimension. According to this, when we become convinced that friendship is incompatible with the ideals of a moral theory, a typical response is to question such a theory and ask whether it should be considered a correct account of moral demands. If we become aware that living up to the demands of a particular moral theory would prevent friendship, and for that matter good life, the first response by many moral theorists is to take that to be a compelling argument against that particular moral conception. Moral theorists would take such a conflict to be a valid basis for revising the theory in question. To put it more correctly, "For many moral theorists, the discovery of incompatibility between morality and friendship would be proof, not that friendship is immoral, but that our previous ideas about morality were too narrow"(Stroud 2006, 520). When we accept the conflict as relevant in moral theorizing, what it suggests is that we accept a particular problem on moral theory choice. According to Stroud, an argument like the one sketched above has been very "influential against consequentialism so clearly that many anti consequentialists are relying on such a constraint. Most importantly, even some consequentialists accept it" (Stroud 2006; 520). Accordingly, if the standards promulgated by conventional epistemology see an act which is extremely important for a good life as irrational, we have good reason, not to live up to those standards.<sup>8</sup> We have every reason to ask whether those theories offer a sufficient account of epistemic rationality. There is no reason to accept a conception of epistemic rationality on which we have good reasons to shun. It might be better to rethink the assumption that epistemic rationality requires the kind of epistemic impartiality from which friendship seems necessarily to depart. We must "adopt a less purist, more fluid approach to epistemological theorizing, on which epistemological theories are in principle open to criticism from data like these"(Stroud 2006;522). Instead of concluding that friendship is epistemically irrational, we should instead conclude that our previous ideas of epistemic rationality were too narrow.

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<sup>8</sup>Stroud believes that even though the two norms are operating from separate domains with moral norms being the practical domain, however, the epistemic norms should not close its mind on practical issues. She encourages that we should view the business of epistemological theory to be compatible with critical human goods, such as friendship. (See Stroud 2006;522).

To make the next section clearer for better understanding, I will like to simplify the epistemic partiality argument into basic premises and conclusions. Stroud's argument when simplified will give us something like this;

Premises:

- (1). Friendship is indispensable for a good life or flourishing life.
- (2). Friendship is based on the character of your friend and esteem for his merit and a commitment to protect this character and esteem.
- (3). Doxastic bias is required to protect a friend's character and hold him in high esteem.
- (4). There is doxastic bias in friendship
- (5). Doxastic bias in friendship is a severe epistemic flaw.
- (6). We ought to do what promotes a flourishing life.

Conclusion:

- (7). We ought to be doxastically biased.
- (8). Friendship positively requires us to be epistemically biased.
- (9). Doxastic bias is constitutive of friendship.

What I have tried to do is to break down the argument for clarity purposes to show to the reader where the bone of contention lies. My aim in this thesis is to demonstrate that premise (3) is problematic. The issue as I see it has to do with the fact that Stroud tells us to hold our friends in high esteem for whatsoever reasons (wrong or right). And also to protect our friend's character without any reservations. We can all accept premise (2) that one needs to have some esteem for his friend as a necessary condition for friendship. However, the question is whether this feature of friendship requires us to be such irresponsible in our beliefs about our friends? Before I proceed into my critique of Stroud, I will like to remind the reader that many others share the same assumptions with Stroud's account. So, in the next section, I will submit a review of what others think about epistemic partiality in friendship.

## SECTION TWO

### 2. THE MAIN OBJECTIONS TO EPISTEMIC PARTIALITY ARGUMENT

The argument I am putting forth is that premise (3) is objectionable. In that, if we accept the premise that a good character is a precondition for friendship, then epistemic partiality if cultivated will weaken such character. Therefore, epistemic partiality undermines friendship. Friends should hold each other in high esteem (for the sake of the friendship) but for the right reasons. There are many attempts to resist epistemic partiality in friendship. These views differ in many directions. However, the common theme that runs across these objections is whether the norms of friendship conflict with that of epistemology. In their attempts to resolve these conflicts, they end up sharing some of Stroud's assumptions. In this section, I will review relevant literature that shares some of the concerns on the matter.

Kawal, (2012), argue against premises (4) and (5) by questioning the assertion that there is no conflict of norms in epistemic partiality in friendship. In his opinion, we do not form beliefs in friendship in a way which violates epistemic standards. However, his inquiry led him to accept premise (4). His point is that there exists some slight bias in belief formation in friendship, but he affirms that any such purported bias would be epistemically acceptable. He asserts that even if we expect changes to a friend's epistemic behavior, at least part of this can be explained in light of paying attention to different features of the situation than one might with a stranger. However, even with such difference, the friend's epistemic behavior can abide by standard epistemic norms; therefore, conclusion (8) is false. First, the obligations we have as friends vary with the nature of the friendship. Obviously, our close friends demand more from us than strangers. Therefore, we can assume that the friendships under discussion are close ones and ones that would be among the most demanding. Also, whether a person will be partial in favor of a friend when forming beliefs depends on many reasons including (i) the type of friendship, and (ii) the issue at involved. It would be unreasonable for a friend with whom we share certain activities and interests to probe into the extent of our charitable giving suddenly. In this manner, I do not need to be irresponsible in my assessment of your abilities in some trivial issues. This view seems to be plausible as Stroud indicated concerning a more general positive way that we are required to form beliefs about our friends. It is more likely a case where a friend asks you to give him a firm critique. Even if we think friendship compel us to belief in favor of our friends, Kawal says that a "slight bias on behalf of our friends is, permissible according to the norms of friendship. However, this slight bias falls

within the bounds of standard epistemic norms"(Kawal 2012;24). There is no clash between the two sets of norms. The answer according to him is lies in cases where, a good friend has promised to render a genuine evaluation of his friend's effort. In this instance, a positive bias seems counter to what is required of a good friend. However, because we assume that friendships are essential, if forming negative beliefs can undermine the friendship, we have reason to be very careful in forming such beliefs.<sup>9</sup>As noted, there is a significant price to pay if you falsely believe about your friend. For this reason, a good friend may need more evidence for these negative claims. For example, a good friend might not form negative belief about his friend even if such belief will be epistemically justified. A good friend might consider all relevant prospects concerning his friend's conduct that others may not be willing to consider. However, Kawal says this is hardly epistemically problematic. Kawal suggests that a good friend's attempt to analyze his friend's behavior may cause him to suffer some epistemic downside, but some level of bias is acceptable in friendship.

Like Kawal, Hawley (2012), also rejects premises (4) and (5) by arguing that the reason for a good friend's epistemic behavior as Stroud described is because there is trust involved. She claims that it is not impossible to trust a friend without violating the epistemic standards. Hawley also believes that conclusion (8) is objectionable. She raises two main points. (1) There are instances where there can be trust without belief. In this case, no epistemic standards have been violated and (2) where trust involves belief, one must trust for self-interested reasons- thus, to be trusted back. On the second account, trust involves high risk. The risk of trusting irrationally. Due to this risk, it is normal not to risk this trust for strangers. Hawley accepts premise (4) by acknowledging the fact that trust between good friends can be irrational. But she permitted it for the sake of the friendship. She evaluates how these claims about friendship apply to the particular case of our beliefs and behavior around trusting. Hawley thinks that Trustworthiness is a trait everyone admires. It is a quality we would not like to withhold from our friends. On this view, we tend to think that our friends are trustworthy. These are reasons that go beyond epistemic reasons. And they also do not apply to beliefs about the trustworthiness of strangers. Trustworthiness in friendship is a special thing. Nonetheless, not all trust involves belief. For instance, "trusting someone to do X is compatible with lack of belief that she will do X. Where trust does not involve belief, it is obvious then that trust is not governed by epistemic standard"(Hawley 2012; 6). This would then make

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<sup>9</sup>Stroud also takes it as given that friendship is based on character and it is indispensable for good life hence her motivation for doxastic bias.

room for prudence. It is based on this reason we can trust friends to do something even if we do not have justification to believe they honor our trust. Here, Hawley treats trust in friendship as a gamble and indicates that there is no need of epistemic reason to believe. Hawley anticipates the danger of with her conception and warns that, although this sort of "trust-without-belief can be reasonable without positive epistemic support, it can nevertheless be made unreasonable if it is undermined by epistemic factors"(Hawley 201;6-7).

She suggests that although it can be reasonable to trust someone without a good epistemic reason to believe that she is trustworthy, "trust becomes unreasonable when there is a good epistemic reason to believe the person is untrustworthy"(Hawley 2012;7). The reason is that the supposition that p is rationally incompatible with the belief that not-p. this is because if you believe that p, you are not supposed to work not -p into your plan. You are only supposed to plan with p. Moreover, "working both the supposition that p and the supposition that not-p into your plans, means that you will be unable to plan coherently"(Hawley 2012;6). So, if the weight of your evidence points to not-p, then you must believe that not-p. And this is the supposition you must work into your plans. So, it is doxastically irrational to trust a friend to do something if you have evidence that he will not do it. This is an essential notion of dependence befitted to form the basis of a concept of trust. The reason is that even though we can sometimes decide to trust, in other instances, we cannot. This is because of the evidence that the person is untrustworthy. In such situations, we help the person, or we face the challenge of being disappointed. However, we cannot choose to trust someone if the evidence points other way. If we are in a situation where we have not epistemically obliged to believe a person is trustworthy or not, by hypothesis, our actions in such a situation is not governed by epistemic reasons. This is where friendship gives us reasons for our actions or choices. For example, you and I are friends, so this gives me a reason to come and help you when you are in trouble, for example. If I do this, you benefit. In the same way, if I trust you, you are likely to benefit. Because there are opportunities and freedom in being trusted. Moreover, coming to help you up when you are in trouble is somewhat tricky. That is why we do not need to risk for strangers. Sometimes, the evidence is not so strong to believe that you are reliable. In this way trusting you can be tedious for me. Due to this risk, it is justifiable to trust friends. So, we have reasons to trust our friends when this is epistemically permissible. Even is we have no justification to believe that they will fulfil our trust.

In such circumstances, we have reasons to trust our friends. These reasons are self-interest ones. This is because trusting your friend will strengthen the friendship and motivate him to trust

you in return. For example, Stroud argues that ‘A good friend does not defend her friend outwardly while inwardly believing the worst of her friend’ (Stroud 2006, 505). However, there are many possible explanations available for this claim. Let us consider first, that a good friend must not form a belief about his friend that is not incline towards the least lenient extreme of what is permissible epistemically. This is in line with the idea that a good friend should not believe what is doxastically impermissible. Secondly, it can be said that the person in question is acting hypocritically, he says one thing while believing another. These difficulties are heightened when we consider trust in friendship. We have epistemically permissible reasons to trust our friends partly because of the benefits we enjoy from trusting each other. These benefits do not depend upon us believing; whether our friends will be untrustworthy or not. Moreover, the risks involved in trusting without belief are the same as the risks we take when we believe that our trust will be honored. This is where friendship gives us reason to take these risks for our friends, so that they will enjoy the benefits. Nonetheless, this does not give us reason to believe that our friend is trustworthy, especially when the evidence does not support our belief.

Goldberg (2018), like Kawal and Hawley questions premise (4) and (5) and argued that, while it is true that friendship requires us to form beliefs regarding our friends, however, there are various epistemic conducts we engage in, but as we do so none of these practices violate any epistemic norms of justified belief. Even though we sometimes end up forming unjustified beliefs about our friends, Goldberg contends that this partial epistemic practices should not be regarded as demands of friendship.<sup>10</sup> Goldberg uses value-reflecting reasons to make his point. According to him, “once we appreciate the value reflecting reasons in play in friendships, we will appreciate that participation in the practices of a good friend, in the way that friendship demands, is epistemically innocuous” (Goldberg 2018,5). There are three steps outlined in the value-reflecting argument. The first step is that of value reflecting practical reasons. According to which, a person who values a thing has practical reasons to act in special ways towards that thing. This is because part of what it is to value something is to do what will preserve and protect it and to avoid doing what would undermine it. They are the primary practical reasons derived from the value you place on that thing. The second reason is that these practical reasons come in degree. The more you value something, the stronger your practical reasons would be to protect it, and to avoid doing what would undermine it. However, Goldberg believes that this can somewhat bring some difficulties in

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<sup>10</sup>. See Goldberg 2018; pp3. Goldberg seems to agree with Stroud. Stroud's main clash is that the epistemic conduct of good friend will not pass the standard spelled out by epistemic norms.

the sense that a person who values a thing might take his practical reasons to be something that cannot be sacrificed for any other good. Most especially relating to non-moral goods. This then leads to the third step or reason in which Goldberg asserts that one has epistemic reasons to think that a person in question values something. In this direction, what it means to have such reasons as a friend is to have doxastic reasons to think that your friend also has practical reasons to do what he can to defend what he values. Insofar as you have such epistemic reasons to believe that the person's value on the thing is strong, your epistemic reasons support you to think that the person's value-reflecting reasons are strong. This works in either way in friendship.

According to Goldberg, when you accept that you owe it to your friend to react to new significant information about him, that reflects what Stroud intimated then you are faced with the question of how to form epistemically justified beliefs about your friend. The answer lies in the value-reflecting reasons that are generated by a mutually valued friendship. For instance, when two friends mutually recognize that they value and cherish their friendship, in that situation, both have good reasons to do what they can to nourish the friendship and to avoid doing what will undermine. In the case study Stroud describe, Goldberg thinks it is possible for a friend to behave as described and yet still have a justified belief. The key he says is in recognizing the relevant set of value-reflecting reasons at play. For example, in a case where your friend tells you something, your friend is in effect telling you to trust him about that. In this instance, you are enriching the friendship if you are worthy of your friend's trust. Also, you put the friendship in danger if you are not worthy of his trust. We can conclude from this that you have practical reasons to tell the truth and practical reasons to avoid lying. Generally, your reasons will be stronger following the degree to which the two of you value the friendship. For his part, your friend also has the same reasons to behave in specific ways and to refrain from behaving in certain ways that will harm the friendship. In short, you and your friend have practical reasons to do what you can to avoid risking this sort of damage to the friendship. Goldberg concludes that in the case wherein the friendship, each value in the same degree, they have good epistemic reasons to believe that they will be telling the truth because they have practical reasons to do so. Since friends ought not to do that which will undermine their friendship because of their practical reasons, they have epistemic reasons in the case of doubt to require more evidence. Thus, exhibiting all the cognitive behavior, Stroud outlined. According to him, the fact that a friend "has (friendship-generated, value-reflecting) practical reasons to get more evidence and to consider whether there is alternative (epistemically permissible) construal of the evidence itself—enjoys independent motivation"(Goldberg 2018,10).



One can find himself at a given time with practical reasons to gather more evidence, and then to re-adjust his beliefs to fit his new total evidence even if his current evidence would justify the belief. This occurs when we have practical reasons to re-open the investigation. This involves no violation of any ordinary epistemic standards. Friendship works in the same manner whereby we can have practical reasons to re-open inquiry. For example, when a friend hears of something important about his friend that goes against his current evidence. Goldberg says, you “owe it to your friend to get more evidence, and to make sure he has explored all of the places that are most likely to deliver further significant evidence including evidence vindicating his friend” (Goldberg 2018, 11). This is no more impermissible from an epistemic point of view.<sup>11</sup>

Another way in which the practices by which you form beliefs regarding your friend manifest a more general practice is that you sometimes have practical reasons to see whether there is an alternative interpretation of your evidence. This claim can seem relatively unproblematic if we assume that for any single body of evidence, there is always more than one set of beliefs that are rendered rational by that evidence. Given this assumption, a friend would be free to search for and to endorse the friendliest of all the epistemically permissible interpretation of the evidence.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, it is normal that we sometimes have value-reflecting practical reasons to get more evidence before making any judgment. As well as value-reflecting practical reasons to see whether there is any more favorable interpretation of our current evidence.<sup>13</sup> There is nothing wrong about any of this says, Goldberg. It has nothing special to do with friendship. What friendship does is to provide us with a value reflecting practical reasons that reflect how we value the friendship itself. Once we recognize this, there is no more pressure to endorse the doctrine of Epistemic Partiality in Friendship.

“The point of the appeal to value-reflecting reasons, then, is to make clear that when it comes to friendship, the real value we place in the friendship generates practical reasons for us to do various things. Moreover, our doing these things can, and typically will, have epistemic effects insofar as these values themselves are matters of mutual knowledge.

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<sup>11</sup> I think this is not a problem for Stroud. Her main concern is that with the rigorous search for the shreds of evidence and the hypotheses, a good friend tends to favor those that are more positive concerning the information about his friend. See Stroud 2006;511-19.

<sup>12</sup> Goldberg thinks that this assumption is very controversial in that it is incompatible with the doctrine of uniqueness. According to this doctrine, for anybody of evidence obtained by a subject and a proposition, there is a uniquely rational doxastic attitude one should have in the proposition. See Goldberg 2018, pp 10

<sup>13</sup> Stroud might resist here that taking your friend to be the reason for more favorable interpretation of the evidence is not in itself an epistemic reason. See Stroud 2006;512-15

Whether these reasons will always point in a univocal direction, to tell the truth to our friends is not ours to tell” (Goldberg 2018,11-12).

So far, I have tried to show the reader the objections to epistemic partiality in friendship. All these objections seem to acknowledge that there is indeed doxastic bias in friendship. However, their attention seems to be on whether the two norms conflicts. They seem to agree that the bias in the friendship depends on how important the friendship is to us and the matter involved. They seem to encourage bias as a way of avoiding negative consequences. Nonetheless, one question these critics did not answer is the claim that we need this bias to save a friend's character. Stroud insists that this bias is imperative in friendship to protect a friend’s character and his esteem. For a reason that friendship promotes good life. This question and related ones will be the focus in the next section. I invite you to join me as I submit the instrumental argument I am putting forward.

## SECTION THREE

### 3.1 THE INSTRUMENTAL ARGUMENT FOR FRIENDSHIP

#### 3.2 INTRODUCTION

Stroud's efforts to uncover the nature of friendship raises several puzzles. Scholars who are interested in the pursuit of friendship have quickly found the difficulties involved in understanding her concept. However, to resolve the conflict they have fallen into the same dilemma, particularly in the friendship under consideration. An examination of her account raises practical anxieties about the application of friendship when it comes to a good life. In order to consider the merits of character-friendship seriously, as it is included in her account, it is necessary for the reader to understand the practical reasons I bring to the table as a formula for good friendship.

#### 3.3 THE ARGUMENT

In the section, I submit an account which, when successful, will render epistemic partiality invalid. In this account, I contend that premise (3) is problematic. The reason is that friendship is based on good-character and esteem for our friends.<sup>14</sup> It appears that epistemic partiality undermines such character. Therefore, epistemic partiality undermines friendship. Now in what follows, I will try to rehearse my defense as clearly as possible. What I seek to achieve is to show that doxastic bias undermines good character if we accept friendship in a strict sense to be based on character. I present two defenses for arguments.

The first, I will call 'the argument from vice' which states that doxastic bias is a vice and will promote other vices when cultivated in friendship. Therefore, it will undermine good character.<sup>15</sup>

Virtues, as we know, are interrelated and so doxastic bias may undermine our commitment to other virtues which promote flourishing life. For example, employing doxastic bias to deviate from the

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<sup>14</sup>One caveat I must place here is that I take for granted the assumption of Stroud that friendship is character-based-friendship. There are other accounts of friendship that portray friendship as opposed or at least unconnected to good character. These accounts also assume that friendship is about closeness to each other's perspectives, and friends' coordination of values and activities. On these accounts, friendship is a distinct but non-moral good, whose norms can conflict with those of morality. See Dean and Kennett (2000), pp.278; Nehamas (2010), pp. 294; White (1999), pp.79-88,

In order to stay faithful to the argument, I take Stroud's assumption as a given and beg to let other notion of friends out of this scope.

<sup>15</sup>This kind of argument is not new. It has been used in the moral domain to argue for virtues like honesty and impartiality. Employing the same line of reason must not be taken as an endorsement. See (Peikoff 1993, pp 267and 1997; pp 274-280.

right judgment of a friend's bad behavior is unjust. Now to begin the first part, let me attempt to elaborate on how a good friend's character is undermined by doxastic bias. Stroud motivates epistemic partiality in friendship by taking it as a means to maintain high esteem among friends. The absence of it will lead to difficulties and probably the end of the friendship. One must protect this image of his friend to sustain the friendship and keep the relationship stronger. I will assume here that the premise (2) is true. Let me agree that in some sense friendship is based in part on the character and esteem for our friends. I will also accept that these features are not only valuable for friendship, but they must be protected and nourished as well, partly because they are the determining factors for a flourishing friendship. It is assumed that friendship is indispensable for a good life.<sup>16</sup> However, what makes friendship indispensable is something important we must look out for. To do this, I will like to borrow from the camp of Aristotle to buttress the point. Aristotle's thoughtful discussion on the nature of friendship is a substantial justification. Although his account of friendship requires rigorous analysis, I contend that his premise, that 'perfect friendship' is essential to a fully flourishing human life will contribute significantly to my account.<sup>17</sup> In that, in perfect friendship, we are able to understand ourselves as emotional and rational beings. These are essential in realizing our virtues and achieve a good life. Aristotle argued that a perfect type of friendship is the one based on the recognition of good character (Sheffield, 2011; 251-271). What must be understood is that it is individuals who are identical in virtue and are excellent in character who presents the ideal form of friendship. As noted, Cooper (1977) in translating Aristotle refers to the friendship of the good as 'character friendship' and argues that it is a more appropriate term to ascribe to it. His reason is that the latter term more precisely describes the meaning that Aristotle ascribes to friendship insofar as it is based on a person's character. In other words, it is their personal qualities and good deeds that attract individuals into friendship. What is worth noting here is that Aristotelians believe that "this attraction exists even if a friend exhibits imperfect actions" (Cooper, 1977; 629). The rationale is that character friendship takes time to develop, and the motive is to help one another grow in good character.<sup>18</sup> Sherman (1989) agrees with this view of character friendship and further states that it is through this form or type of friendship that an

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<sup>16</sup>See Stroud 2006;522. I attribute the ownership of these assumptions to Stroud. It does not necessarily reflect my opinion on friendship. They are used for the sake of this argument.

<sup>17</sup>. To attempt to pursue fully, Aristotle's notion of friendship in this thesis (with the constraints of time and space) is to try to do the impossible. Because of that, I will only use his ideas in fragments to make my case. This might not reflect the fuller picture, but for simplicity sake, I deserve a pardon.

<sup>18</sup>This is my fundamental reason for resisting partiality in friendship. It makes sense to say that if the main aim of character-based-friendship is to *help* each other grow in good character, then it is right for friends not to live a hypocritical lifestyle as epistemic partiality in friendship seems to encourage.

individual is provided with emotional and rational self-knowledge and is enabled to comprehend virtue and attain happiness in life. It is the pursuit and the realization of these virtues by which one attains the good life. It becomes evident that friends are then supposed to promote good character and not do what will undermine it. This is perhaps why Stroud thinks it is indispensable for a good life. If friendships are valuable because they help promote good character, which subsequently leads to a good life, it then becomes apparent what the role of a good friend ought to be. If a good character is so crucial in friendship as noted above, it is then inconceivable to think that doxastic bias in friendship will serve such purpose. The attempt above is to establish the fact that friendship is indeed based on the character and esteem for your friend. Having done, that let me move on to demonstrate how doxastic bias will ruin such character and subsequently the friendship.

As I see it, a friend whose bad character is shielded through doxastic bias will be motivated to overlook his weaknesses and will never seek to work on improving his character. As noted earlier, friends are to help each other realize their virtues.<sup>19</sup> Also, it is only by owning up to the issues can one transcend them. In this way, calling your good friend out on his bad conduct will be the right action in friendship. Lindgren, for instance, echoes that there is no point in shielding your friend's bad conducts. The explanation is that "being reluctant to accept the negative feature of a person may stand in the way of the friendship. Furthermore, if you are blind" to your friend's failures and assume they are less severe than they are", you as a good friend "may mistakenly think that your friend has things covered which may, in turn, make you less prone to offer the support he might need"(Lindgren 2016, 107). Should not a good friend be opened to all the possibilities of his friend's character and conduct, so that both can open avenue by which friends develop good character and well-poised life? The answer is obvious. I believe that shielding your friend (knowingly or unknowingly) in the face of bad conduct will motivate more of such adverse behavior. Let us imagine, for example, that Sam's behavior is part of a pattern of behavior that prevents him from having the kind of meaningful relationships he wants with women. To be able to help him as a good friend, to offer good assistance and encouragement to break this behavior, it seems you should not downplay or even look the other way when being provided with information that indicates that Sam is a good person. The above considerations suggest that for you to be a

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<sup>19</sup>. The point is that friendship must be nurtured like an organism. Its parts, which in this case is 'the friends' must be closely aligned and coordinated with respect to some important values. Though seeking for the well-being of the friendship is necessary for friendship, doing so by doxastic bias is not necessarily sufficient for its well-being. An unwell part (i.e., vicious friend) necessarily means an unwell organism. See a similar line of reasoning like this by Foot, (2002; pp26), Cooper(1977; pp 619)

good friend of Sam, you need to have a clear vision of his negative traits, and thus be open to forming not only positive but also negative beliefs about him.

Another problem with doxastic bias is that it will become cognitively easy overtime for a good friend to demonstrate bias if he consistently exhibits such conduct. This may lead to deception of himself and his friend. For instance, it becomes easier to adopt a biased viewpoint if already presenting slanted truth to others. This conduct if persisted in will inevitably corrupt the character of the friends and corrupt the quality of the friendship. This is important because if leaning away from the truth becomes a habit; it will inevitably manifest in the friendship.<sup>20</sup> As seen from the above, the motivation for doxastic bias in friendship in Stroud's argument is misdirected. Moreover, when encouraged, will ruin the friendship.

Let us consider yet another similar, but slightly different defense to my account. It goes like this. There is always preeminence of existence. This means that deceptive doxastic attitude in favor of a friend will not change the reality about the truth that he has acted badly.<sup>21</sup> To elaborate more on this, let us assume that the case study of Sam indeed happened and Sam, your friend committed the act which you as his good friend you are not aware of. However, you know him to be a good person. So, you convince yourself into thinking that he is a good person and there by ignoring the evidence. Stroud tells us that because you take him to be a good person, you must not corrupt this image. Hence a good friend's motivation for his doxastic behavior. The question is whether this conduct of the good friend alters the reality of Sam's behavior? If indeed friendship is based on character, then it can then be reasoned that Sam has a questionable character. Moreover, as a good friend of Sam, your doxastic behavior in favor of him does not change him.<sup>22</sup> I doubt if this is a true friendship as we are told. This seems to me like Stroud is promoting sycophantic life.<sup>23</sup> Based on our previous assumption that friendship is based on character, I submit that Sam and his friend cannot be called good friends. The rationale is that "true friendship is limited to the good, and friendship is based on virtue and presupposes it. For a virtuous man is one of strong character, just

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<sup>20</sup> Of course, Stroud was silent on this notion. She encourages doxastic bias but never stated whether this is a one-time action or a consistent pattern of behavior of which we must adopt as friends. We can only assume either way to make the point. In this case, I assume that it is a pattern we must adopt in friendship. Elder (2010) pp 45-68 has similar where he harshly states that vicious people cannot be good friends. In that, there is a tendency for the vicious character to manifest from time to time.

<sup>21</sup> Peikoff(1993) pp267 used the same idea to argue for objectivity. His idea was more on moral objectivity; most importantly, on impartiality and honesty. I employ this notion to defend this account in a slightly different way. .

<sup>22</sup> If we assume that Sam and his friend share common virtue based on that they are friends. And Sam has secretly and consistently violated this character. The only conclusion this may deserve it perhaps partners in crime. This is not character-friendship anymore.

<sup>23</sup> The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines sycophancy as servile self-seeking flattery.

and generous, loyal, upright, and not insolence"(Marie 2006;3). A good friend ought, to be honest with his friend. For friends must always be truthful with one another because flattery and pretense destroy the friendship. One must correct a friend when necessary. There must not be a place for suspicion in friendship because loyalty is its foundation.<sup>24</sup> Friends ought to defend and protect the esteem of the friendship but must be done for the right reason and in the right way. Doxastic bias should not be a protective shield for the dignity of the friendship. If we accept the premise that friendship in question is character based, then we must not also accept that doxastic bias is required to shield a good character because doxastic bias is questionable. This will undermine friendship. Of course, Stroud may oppose that this argument looks too obvious to mention. She may argue that doxastic bias protects a friendship from the sharp edges of reality. It protects the good friend from spiteful people to ruin the friendship. However, this can only be true in the short-term context. But when the fuller context is considered where trust and reputation are in play, the long-term consequences of this bias will serve more harm than good in the friendship.<sup>25</sup> What I have done in the preceding paragraphs is to show how epistemic partiality can undermine good character. And hence undermine friendship. Stroud makes her assumptions as if the only way for a good friend to act in friendship concerning his friend is to be biased. To conclude my argument in a hopeful way, I will like to submit an alternative way to maintain the status of friendship and still be a good believer.

Now let us look at the other way we can look at the issue at stake so that as a good friend of Sam you can subject the right kind of judgment to the new information and still maintain the dignity of the friendship without doxastic bias. I agree with Stroud that good friends will generally consider all the hypotheses and potential evidence that support this new information about his friend. What is questionable for me is the claim that the epistemic behavior of this person will inevitably bend in favor of his friend, which will make him form only positive beliefs about his friend. I bet to differ from the above assertion. In that, I find it hard to believe that a good friend will be so unwilling to accept negative information about his friend.<sup>26</sup> As I see it, it seems

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<sup>24</sup> See Elder, 2010, 50-76. He insists that bad people cannot be good friends.

<sup>25</sup> If we accept that the conduct of a good friend is a one-time behavior, then it will not be problematic. However, when it becomes a habit in the friendship, then it will ruin the primary fiber of the friendship. For example, the reputation and trust will become questionable even among the friends themselves. No one will trust a person who consistently tells them what they want to hear.

<sup>26</sup> Hooker, (2011), has a compelling argument on this. The concept is called impartial benevolence. Thus, he urges that we should all try to have impartial benevolence as the direct determiner of our everyday decisions? Benefits to anyone else must count in your reasoning for no less than the same-size benefits to you, pp30-41. This is directly applicable in character-based-friendship. On the other hand, Kawal (2012), Hawley (2012) and Goldberg (2018) agree that this is possible. Their claim is that friendship comes in different levels and the value you place on it matters most.

reasonable and even common for you as a good friend of Sam to express some form of astonishment as a response to this new information and not necessarily to form any belief. It will also be healthy to remark on his behavior towards that woman and disappointingly express how you feel about that because you never expected Sam to act like that if it is true. Traditionally, it will not be surprising to call up a meeting with Sam if he is available so that this issue will be discussed. You may disappointingly express your feelings to Sam about his behavior towards that woman if it is true, but I doubt if this is enough grounds to break the bond between you and your good friend.<sup>27</sup> Stroud, however, insists that a good friend would quickly consider some high possible evidence to discredit the information as true. Failure to do this might bring the friendship to an offensive end.<sup>28</sup> I see this as a rather tricky position; one that is too judgmental. According to Stroud, you ought not to attend to the story as an impartial observer for you owe it to your friend to defend him. However, I doubt it very much if as a good friend of Sam, you will be greatly dismayed by this report and conclude that he is just unworthy of being your friend.<sup>29</sup> No such a good person will abandon his friend just because they do bad things occasionally. My admission here is that recognizing and accepting your friend's traits (both positive and negative) is vital for the friendship. The above claim will not be difficult for Stroud to accept. She writes that to become someone's friend is to cast your lot in with his and to give and to ally oneself with your friend. It is evident that a good friend can be a good believe as well. If the well-being of the friends is paramount to the friendship then, such an unbiased, a non-judgmental approach to your friend's conduct will help him accept his wrongdoings and improve upon his character. In this way, you establish a strong bond upon which the friendship is built; seeking to nurture each other in virtue. What I have tried to show in the preceding paragraphs is to demonstrate that it is perfectly reasonable and possible for a good friend to react in an unbiased and a non-judgmental way towards his friend's lousy conduct instead of positively shielding a flawed character. Since it is possible to act impartially towards one's friend without undermining the friendship, I suggest we should opt for instrumental argument. And when the instrumental argument for friendship is accepted, the reasons for motivating doxastic bias evaporate.

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<sup>27</sup> This may quickly sound as mere speculations. However many scholars including Kawal(2012), Elder(2013) and Lindgren(2016) have acknowledged this notion and have asserted that friends must be willing to embrace each other's traits in totality both negative and positive.

<sup>28</sup> This assumption seems so strong that even Aristotelians would not adopt it. Cooper, (1997) and Sheffield, (2011) have an opposite view.

<sup>29</sup> Goldberg's value-reflecting reasons will support this. The issue at stake and how important the issue is for you to determine this. And even that being said, if you value your friend greatly, hardly will any issue break your friendship.



## SECTION FOUR

### 4. OBJECTIONS TO THE INSTRUMENTAL ARGUMENT.

In this section, I lay on the table answer(s) to the question(s), which I anticipate from critics of the instrumental argument I have presented. The instrumental argument states that since friendship is based on character; epistemic partiality undermines this character and therefore, undermines friendship. Two reasons account for this view. First is the argument from vice, which states that epistemic bias is a vice and will promote vices if entertained. Therefore, epistemic bias undermines friendship. Also, employing deceptive doxastic attitude in favor of your friend does not alter the fact that he is a bad person if he has indeed acted badly. On this basis, I object to epistemic bias in friendship and proposes an unbiased approach in dealing with our friends. Stroud might worry and argue that I am trussing friendship too closely to virtue. This may rule out an intuitively vital feature of a good friend which is 'responsiveness to their interests,' even when these interests seem to conflict with our morals.<sup>30</sup> Those who appeal to this notion argue that "in becoming a friend, one becomes the kind of person for whom the friend's concerns are taken directly as reasons for action" (Stocker1981;747).

This motivates Stroud to insists that as a good friend, you should be motivated by the interest of your friend and defend him. A good friend does not become silent when the character of his friend is at issue in the court of public opinion. Therefore, one ought to defend him even if doing so will risk being doxastically biased. In fact, failure to be open to your friend's interest seems inherently unfriendly. If I do not defend my friend and fight for the interest of his character, then I have not made a serious commitment to the other person in the strong sense that friendship requires.<sup>31</sup> This argument seems appealing to those who see friendship as indispensable for good life and incompatible with morality. However, shielding a flawed character with epistemic bias seems incompatible with excellent character in some sense. It can also be argued that flouting epistemic norms in the names of friendship does not seem like something in sync with good character. Note

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<sup>30</sup> Stroud assumes that friendship is an essential human relationship, and it is indispensable for a good life. Thus, motivating epistemic bias as a means of building esteem in friendship if necessary. She also contends that as a good friend, one need not act as an impartial observer. Such behavior she believes put the friendship in danger, thereby restricting good life. (Stroud 2006). Given this, she insists that if friendship norms conflict with the moral or epistemic norm, we ought to choose friendship. Stroud suggests that our moral and epistemic norms should excuse us because we are busy enjoying friendship. Others like Cocking and Kennett(2000) share similar view like Stroud. They conclude that necessarily friendship involved moral danger.

<sup>31</sup> See Stroud (2006;511) for her comments on that

that the concern I am raising in the instrumental argument is not merely one of morality about the importance of being strictly virtuous, but rather that friendship involves a commitment to take your friend's personal growth as valuable and let that motivate you to recognize all traits in your friend. Because not doing so can undermine his character and ruin the friendship. For a typical example of this, let us consider that being a good friend to a person who has been very bad in his treatment of women whom you have been defending consistently through epistemic bias, reinforcing this trait in him. At the same time, you are perpetrating epistemic conduct that always leads away from the truth. This kind of friendship then seems incompatible with the type that is based solely on good character. What instrumental argument suggest is that the best balance for friendship should be a combination of positive and negative bias together with realistic hopes and accurate feedback.<sup>32</sup> Friendship must involve exercising some restraint over the shape of your life and your interest if you are to get the most out of it.

In contrast, my critics might say that this attitude of a good friend I am suggesting might make him too cold and perhaps lack the motivation to be an excellent friend. Such a person cannot display the appropriate warmth and even the right responsiveness that characterize good friends. The appropriate response to this would be that we should not leave a good person to be susceptible to his friend's vices. For example, if friendship involves taking the other's interests as necessarily valuable and friendship as indispensable, this practice of a friend might corrupt one's values and judgments about what is right. Especially when done for a period of time and such change may not be an improvement. Nehamas puts it this way, "I may never realize that as a result of our relationship my judgment was gradually debased and that I may find myself happy to have become someone I would have hated to be, had I not submitted to you" (Nehamas, 2010;280). To avoid this, friends should choose to respond appropriately, considering all evidence with an unbiased disposition, to limit the likelihood of practical consequences as I have suggested. However, that only shows why good friends ought not to choose to act badly in friendship.<sup>33</sup> The point here is that, if you become a friend to someone because of his character, then you ought not to seek to

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<sup>32</sup> By a combination of positive and negative bias, I mean to communicate that a non-judgmental approach to friendship. One in which friendship ought not to be positively biased or negatively bias at the expense of other norms. I assume that there are both negative and positive functions for all the biases. Therefore, one need not be extreme in either way. See Kalp(2011), pp.64-68

<sup>33</sup> I am not suggesting that somehow a person should be 'super holy' in order to be a friend. Instead, I think that in practical life situation, friends demonstrate different behaviors as they carry out their day to day activities. This attitude, ought to be responded as the situation demand. Bad things must be condemned accordingly, and good things must be praised appropriately. The concern for this paper is not to ignore a friend's wrongdoing, as Stroud suggests.

corrupt such character via whatever means.<sup>34</sup> Even if we assume that the best possible friendships are necessarily between virtuous individuals as Aristotle has claimed, this claim will seem implausible without further defense. To defend the idea was never the aim of the instrumental argument. All that I have tried to show in the instrumental argument is that if one would that friendship is necessarily based on character; then such a friendship can only work if the character is protected. And to do that with the wrong reason is to undermine the friendship at large. Of course, I am not suggesting that we should not exalt our friendship to some extent. However, it ought to be done rightly without bias. I only reject the notion that we ought to engage in doxastic bias in order to shade our friend's bad character.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, I have argued that epistemic partiality undermines friendship if we accept that friendship in a stricter sense is based on character. The argument I have present give two justification for that. The first is that when we allow an excellent friend to behave doxastically biased in favor of his friend consistently, this will promote more vices. Epistemic bias seems to be a bad epistemic practice. This is because knowingly leading away from the evidence and correct judgment of your friend's conduct is unjust. Cultivating such behavior in friendship will only corrupt the friendship. The second is that the fact that you esteem your friend's character by deceptive means does not change the reality that the person has flaws in his character. When in our assessment of information about our friends, intentionally favor that which seek to portray him more favorably in a good light, we act deceptively. When we notice this shortcoming, we must correct it. The instrumental argument aims to encourage friends to help each other in their development as a person. Therefore, recognizing their flaws may be one of the ways to help them grow. In fact, in friendship relations that works well the idealization of your friend and the friendship itself helps in the longevity and flourishing of that relationship. However, if the bias becomes excessive and unwarranted, for example, if negative feedback is not considered at all or the positive attitudes towards your friend become unrealistically optimistic, then the bias may become dysfunctional.

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<sup>34</sup> Stroud suggests doxastic bias, positive shielding to cover up a friend's lousy conduct because you take him to be a good person. Not doing so ruins the friendship. I affirm the opposite.

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## EPISTEMILISE VASTU EELISTAMINE SÕPRUSSUHTES

### RESÜMEE

Epistemiiline eelistamine sõprussuhtes on tees, mis väidab, et epistemiiline kallutatatus eksisteerib sõprussuhtes. See kallutatatus esineb, kui sõbra kohta informatsiooni töödelda. Näiteks võttes arvesse fakti, et see inimene on sinu sõbraks põhjusega (mis ei ole epistemiiline põhjus), et käsitleda kõiki hüpoteese ja tõendeid antud sõbra kasuks. Peamine oletus on see, et sõprussuhe baseerub sõbra jaoks karakteril ja lugupidamisel, seega peab tegutsema sellise karakteri kaitsmise huvides. Võttes seda sõprussuhte iseärasusena, me oleme julgustatud eksponeerima seda kallutatust sõprade kasuks. See baseerub faktil, et sõprussuhe on hea elu nimel hädavajalik. Selle vastu tegutsemine tähendab heast elust ilma jääda.

Antud teesi eesmärk on vaielda vastu sellele, et peaksime hülgama epistemiilise kallutatuse sõprussuhtes. Seega, kui me aktsepteerime eeldust, et meie sõprade jaoks baseerub sõprussuhe karakteril ja lugupidamisel, siis õõnestab epistemiiline kallutatatus sellist karakterit ja seeläbi õõnestab ka sõprussuhte. Kaitseks sellele argumendile saab öelda, et epistemiiline kallutatatus on epistemiiline viga ja kui seda sõprussuhtes julgustada, siis propageerime teisi pahesid ja rikume sõprussuhte. Jällegi, kui võtame arvesse fakti, et sõber on käitunud halvasti, siis tema kaitsmine läbi petliku doksastilise kallutatuse ei muuda tõsiasja, et ta on halb inimene.

Seda silmas pidades, isik peab lugu pidama oma sõpradest, aga ainult õigetel eesmärkidel.

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