

Political Obligations and the Duties of Friends

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1. Introduction

Political philosophers have tried to construct a possible relationship between friendship obligations and political obligations. They argue that in addition to sharing certain other features, both species of obligations arise from relationships which have intrinsic value for persons. The intrinsic value of these relationships gives rise to certain obligations that are specific to the relationships. They are therefore not obligations that are owed to persons outside the relationship. They are *special* and not general obligations.

In this essay, I argue that in addition to a significant disanalogy between friendship and citizenship, the intrinsic value conception does not establish a successful possible relationship between friendship obligations and political obligations. This is because the intrinsic value conception fails sufficiently to explain the necessity of action. I propose, rather, an account where value is derived from persons and argue that this account has more prospects for success. This is because it offers a better justification for the necessity of action.

In Section 2, I discuss the intrinsic value argument for the relationship between friendship and citizenship. In Section 3, I discuss the significance of action in political obligation and argue that the necessity of action is what constitutes obligation. I then, in Section 4, give certain characteristics of friendship that defeat the analogy between friendship and citizenship. I go on, in Section 5, to show how the intrinsic value account fails to justify the necessity of action and how a non-intrinsic value account better addresses it.

2. Justifying Special Obligations

Are there obligations that arise by virtue of certain relationships that we have? Some philosophers like Andrew Mason are of the view that there are.¹ For him the relationship of friendship is valuable in itself and the obligations that arise from it are constitutive of the friendship. When we have

¹ Andrew Mason, "Special Obligations to Compatriots," *Ethics* 107 (1977), pp. 427-47.

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a friend, part of being a friend is having certain duties² that we owe only to that person and not another. If, for instance, Joe is my friend and he has a friend called Jamie, there are obligations that I owe to Joe as *my* friend that I do not owe to Jamie. Other opposing views contend, however, that the obligations I owe to Joe are not derived from the relationship but have their source in general moral principles.³

The idea of special duties is here used in two senses, the first being whether I owe those duties to Joe and no other person, and the second being whether the duties have their source in the relationship itself or in the general principles of morality. The sense in which they are called special obligations by those like Mason who contend that they could exist, is a combination of both senses. These obligations are special because I owe them to Joe and no other and also because they arise from the relationship I have with Joe and not from general moral principles. Thus, though both senses can be distinguished, they are inter-linked in any argument for the existence of special obligations of this nature. That Joe is my friend gives rise to obligations that are specific to that relationship and since they are specific in this way, I owe them to Joe alone. To ground them in general moral principles is to remove the basis of justifying my obligations to Joe.

In grounding obligations in relationships, the value of personal human relationships is made significant. Whereas in general moral principles other aspects of human nature and/or less personal levels of relationship are emphasized, in special-obligations arguments the importance of personal human relationships is brought to the fore. Moral principles like the fair play principle seek, on the other hand, to emphasize the role of cooperative enterprises and joint activity for a common goal.⁴ The focus is on the achievement of goals for which there exists a cooperative enterprise obligating persons by virtue of receiving benefits. The conception of the person here is that a person cooperates self-interestedly only for what personal benefits can be obtained by cooperating in the venture. However, with special obligations, persons are conceived as being interested in promoting the welfare of the other person in the relationship. As Lawrence Blum argues,

² I intend to use the terms “duty” and “obligation” interchangeably.

³ Mason, “Special Obligations to Compatriots,” p. 429.

⁴ The principle was first articulated by Hart and developed further by Rawls. H. L. A. Hart, “Are There Any Natural Rights?” *The Philosophical Review* 64 (1955), pp. 175-91; John Rawls, “Legal Obligation and the Duty of Fair Play,” in his *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 122.

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they are acting from an altruistic desire to make another person happy.⁵ The focus here is less on what they want and more on what will be beneficial to the relationship as a whole. Thus if Joe asks me to join him in helping his friend Jamie move, though my obligations are to Joe as my friend and not to Jamie, because doing what Joe asks will make him happy and strengthen our relationship, I am inclined to render my services to his friend Jamie. The dynamics of friendships are such that obligations are linked expressively or constitutively to the good of the relationship. On these obligations as constitutive of the good of friendships, Joseph Raz says:

- (1) Friendship is an intrinsically valuable relationship; it is properly valued for its own sake.
- (2) Part of what it is for two people to be friends is for each to be under certain obligations to each other, and these obligations are justified by the moral good of the friendship.
- (3) These special obligations are internally related to the good of the friendship; that is they are part of that good.⁶

Obligations are here characterized as partially constituting the good of the relationship and therefore internal to it. However, what is not clear is how the characteristic of intrinsic value is linked with that of special obligations as being constitutive and internal to the relationship in this way. Mason argues that friendship is intrinsically valuable as it involves the showing of certain attitudes that are laudable in themselves.⁷ When we are friends with someone we show concern for him and expect concern to be shown reciprocally to us. We also act altruistically for him because, by virtue of friendship, we show sympathy; compassion for the other person is another good effect of having a friend.⁸ In other words, friendship is intrinsically valuable because it makes us better people. However, it remains unclear how this means that we have obligations toward the other person that emanate from the nature of the relationship. Mason goes further to argue that

⁵ Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 43.

⁶ As cited in Christopher Wellman, "Friends, Compatriots, and Special Political Obligations," *Political Theory* 29 (2001), p. 222.

⁷ Mason, "Special Obligations to Compatriots," pp. 439-40.

⁸ *Ibid.*

citizenship, in like manner, has intrinsic value for persons. This is because by virtue of citizenship, persons enjoy equality with other persons and the recognition that comes with it. Also, the collective body of citizens as a whole has great influence in the life of persons. By virtue of citizenship, persons can play their part in the growth and development of the polity. Thus, for him the good of equality, the role that the collective body of citizens plays on persons, and the opportunity it gives persons to contribute to the polity's development makes citizenship intrinsically valuable—and thereby places on persons obligations to it. Mason argues that it is indeed part of being a citizen to carry out one's obligations to the polity.⁹

However, though it gives more flesh to Raz's account, it too fails to make a convincing link between the feature of intrinsic value and that of the existence of special obligations. It seems to presume that a strong account of intrinsic value is sufficient to justify special obligations. However, I argue that it does not. I argue below that obligation implies the necessity of action, and this is not convincingly shown in the intrinsic value account as given by Raz and Mason. I am going to give a non-intrinsic value account in Section 5. I will there argue that if special obligations exist, they are best derived from this account of value.

3. Action and Political Obligation

There are various ways in which action is significant in political obligation. One is that a theory of political obligation seeks to provide us with a reason or reasons for action. It tells us why we should act in a certain way in relation to the law. In complying with such a reason or reasons, we allow the sphere of action to be influenced by that reason or reasons. They are reasons for us to act. Another way is that what the law requires us to do is to act and, even in prohibitory rules which aim to restrict action, we are in a way acting in compliance with the law. As persons we are always in the sphere of action and even in not acting, we are in a way acting. In other words, to act or not to act in one way is still in a more general sense to act. The reasons for action with relation to political obligation can be reasons to explain action, justify action, or motivate action. These categories, however, are not coextensive and may overlap. In trying to explain action, for instance, an account of why we obey the law is sought. This entails more of a descriptive account of why we are inclined to take the law's directives to be authoritative for us, or, in a weaker form, why persons generally think that they are under some moral obligation to obey the law regardless of whether or not they in fact obey the law. Tom Tyler gives such an account based on studies carried out in Chicago. He finds that people obey the law because

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

they are of the view that it is the right thing to do.¹⁰ They believe that legal authority is legitimate and, based on this, feel that they are under some kind of obligation to obey its directives. He therefore seeks to argue that persons do not only have what he calls instrumental reasons for complying with the law—they also have normative reasons. These, as opposed to instrumental reasons, are not reasons drawn from the threat of punishment but are based on a perceived legitimacy of legal authorities.¹¹

Reasons for action with relation to political obligation can also be aimed at justifying compliance with the law. These species of reasons for action give a theoretical framework as a source for political obligation. They show how the framework places persons under an obligation to obey the law. They are distinct from motivating reasons, which are given through the perspective of what benefits obedience to law can produce for the agent. These may seek to motivate the agent to obey the law out of self-interest. This description of motivating reasons deviates from the internalist claim that reasons are by nature motivating.¹² This informs the distinction we make between reasons that justify and reasons that motivate. The sense in which we describe them as motivating reasons is that they are given to provide some sort of incentive for persons to see obedience to law as something that is worth doing. However, this is not to presuppose that when persons obey the law, they do so from any of the reasons in the three categories. An important aim of a theory of political obligation is merely to give a good account of obedience to law—one that *could* influence people and not one that does *in fact* influence people.¹³ Even a theory of action that seeks to explain why people obey the law may not hold true in every circumstance that obedience to law is at issue. The theories best aim to give an account that possibly exists and could influence persons. It has been argued that such theories are not therefore action-guiding if they are “distinct from those on which citizens had reason to act.”¹⁴ However, theories of political obligation are not intended to

¹⁰ Tom Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 170-78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹² Bernard Williams, “Internal and External Reasons,” in his *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 101-13; Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of *Groundwork I*,” in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 43.

¹³ Glen Newey, *After Politics: The Rejection of Politics in Contemporary Liberal Philosophy* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan Publishing, 2001), p. 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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be action-guiding in this way. They are action-guiding because they provide reasons that are *action-reasons* with relation to the obedience to the law. In other words, they are reasons from which persons could act. This places on such theories a further standard—an account of how the reason could be a first-person reason, one that *I* can act from.

Glen Newey gives two liberal attributes of reasons for action with relation to political obligation.¹⁵ The first he calls “transparency,” which refers to the requirement that the society is based on public principles. This publicity is characterized by public access to these principles and the opportunity for public scrutiny of them. He gives a statement representing the significance of transparency for reasons for action as follows: “There must be reasons justifying political obligation, which justify the citizens in *thinking* that he is so obligated.”¹⁶

Transparency does not presuppose unjustified or unjustifiable legitimacy. It rather highlights the need for justification of authority. This justification, according to Newey, need not be the best justification.¹⁷ It need only be a justification that is plausible and acceptable to the citizen. It is also a theoretical rather than practical thesis since it focuses on what the citizen believes to be the case. It is what justifies his “thinking” that he is under an obligation to obey the law that is the main concern of the transparency requirement. This requirement is followed by a second one Newey refers to as “distributivity,” which cuts through any universality and seeks to be grounded in the agent as an individual. It aims to be relevant to the agent as a person. The distributivity requirement is stated as follows: “There must be reasons justifying political obligation, which justify each of the citizens, *acting* on the obligation.”¹⁸

This is a practical thesis that requires a theory of political obligation to give reasons that also motivate action. It relies on the presumption that the only relevant reasons here are internal reasons.¹⁹ Though, as has been said, the reasons that are given by such theories may be distinct from reasons that persons actually act from, where they do not motivate persons to action, their relevance with relation to justifying political obligation is weak. The

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 63, emphasis added.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 64.

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fulfillment of political obligation in whatever form (whether prohibitively or positively) is action. To fail to motivate action is therefore to lose relevance with relation to the obligation to obey the law. By motivation for action here we refer to the capability to motivate rather than actual motivation. The focus is on the notion that persons are capable of being motivated by reasons to act and not whether they are in fact motivated by those reasons. The features of such a species of reasons may vary, but the aim which is to motivate action is central to political obligation. Newey combines the requirements of transparency and distributivity (TD) in the following thesis: “There must be reasons justifying political obligation which justify each of the citizens, acting on the obligation, in thinking that he is so obligated.”²⁰

For Newey, this should represent the yardstick for a good theory of political obligation.²¹ It can either be interpreted as meaning that such a theory should justify belief as well as motivate action or that it should provide internal reasons—reasons that justify belief in the legitimacy of legal authorities as well as motivate persons to comply with the directives of such authorities. However, the TD requirement does not require from theories of political obligation an explanation of obligation as the necessity of action. It fails to emphasize that action in political obligation is to embody necessity. We characterize necessity as being the nature of action within political obligation. It is because action is seen as necessary that we have obligation. Theories of political obligation are not only to justify action—they are also to justify the *necessity* of action. With relation to the obligation to obey the law, necessity is characterized as force not derived outside the will but within the will. By will I mean the force of reason. Thus the force referred to is not supposed to be force akin to duress but the force of reason. A theory of political obligation should compel the will by reason (i.e., from the standpoint of rationality) to act in a certain way.

Obligation is seen here as doing what is required even when we are not inclined to do so. Where we can be influenced to act a certain way regardless of inclination, then there can be said to be obligation. The agent here can be said to be acting out of obligation. Kant thus makes a distinction between acting *from duty* and *acting in conformity with duty*.²² We act in conformity with duty when we do something that we are inclined to do anyway: the act is something that comes easily to us. However, we act from duty when what duty requires is difficult to do but we do it regardless. For

²⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

²¹ Ibid., p. 64.

²² Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 11, 4:398.

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Kant, the act of moral worth is that which we do even though we are not inclined to.²³ It best represents what duty means—the necessity of action. While the first act does not require or show strength of moral character, the second does. When action is necessary, reason rules over inclination and compels the will to act. It is in this compulsion that the internal character of duty is formed. Needless to say, the words “compulsion,” “force,” or “necessity” may incite some discomfort as they may be seen to threaten the autonomy of persons. It can be argued that it is incompatible with the freedom that autonomy entails if persons are compelled or forced. However, for Kant, the character of duty in this characterization means that the will is free. It is free to be its own commander. In being able to command itself rather than be commanded by a force external to it, it is truly free. Duty in this sense does not therefore threaten freedom. It indeed embodies it. It is a free will that is able, by reason, to issue directives to itself and feel bound by these directives.²⁴ This is not to say, however, that even when we act from duty, we act *only* from duty. There are factors in particular situations that also influence us.

Philip Stratton-Lake tries to resolve the tension that could arise here for Kant’s characterization of duty and moral worth by giving what he calls the “symmetry thesis.”²⁵ The significance of this thesis is to make a distinction between primary and secondary motives. While a primary motive may arise from the factors of the specific situation, the secondary motive remains to act in accordance with morality. The relationship between the two motives is that the secondary motive acts as a regulatory motive over the primary motive. Thus even though other factors may exist, and persons are influenced by them, they can still be said to be acting from duty by virtue of the secondary motive.

Another sense in which there can be said to be necessity with relation to political obligation is that the existence of legal directives presents a moral necessity to persons. An analogy can be drawn between Kant’s conception of moral necessity and causal necessity.²⁶ The sense of necessity that can be derived here is not, however, that persons always act in compliance with the

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12, 4:398.

²⁴ Here we mean “moral” and not “legal” directives. However, a legal directive can be a moral directive when it is reflectively endorsed by the agent. For more on reflective endorsement, see Korsgaard, “Kant’s Analysis of Obligation,” p. 49.

²⁵ Philip Stratton-Lake, *Kant, Duty, and Moral Worth* (London: Routledge Publishing, 2000), p. 62.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

law but that the existence of a legal directive *always* presents the need to act in a certain way whether or not persons actually do so. Legal directives here thus take the place of the Moral Law in the case of morality or the Principle of Causation in the case of causation. It can be argued, however, that legal directives—unlike the Moral Law or the Principle of Causation—do not provide a fundamental principle. We only characterize them as being akin to the Moral Law or the Principle of Causation to the extent that their existence necessitates action. The existence of a legal directive creates the need to act. However, I argue that the sense of necessity with relation to political obligation that is relevant here is the sense in which it is the fundamental feature of duty. Duty is the necessity of acting even when we are not inclined to do so. Political obligation is thus the necessity of acting in compliance with the law even when we are not inclined to do so. Theories of political obligation are therefore required to justify not merely action, but also the necessity of action in spite of inclination. This means that the reasons such theories need to provide can only be internal reasons—reasons that motivate as well as justify.

4. Friendship and Citizenship

I will now look closely at the analogy between friendship and citizenship. It has been argued that these two relationships give rise to obligations that are specific to the relationships. It is also argued that both relationships are intrinsically valuable (which is a claim that I will examine more closely in the next section). In this section, I argue that there are certain dissimilarities between friendship and citizenship that affect the derivation of obligations from citizenship. Christopher Wellman identifies some of these dissimilarities.²⁷ For him, friendships are consensual in a way that citizenship is not. Whether or not we consciously choose our friends, we need to give our consent for the friendship to exist and continue. Friendship is not a passive institution. Friends are actively involved in ensuring that the friendship flourishes. There is therefore more direct control exercised by persons in a friendship and it is, as Wellman describes it, more of a “function of our actions” than citizenship is.²⁸ Thus a friendship can come into being simply by saying “she is my friend” or end by declaring “you are no friend of mine!”

Also, as Wellman argues, there is an emotional bond that exists among friends that is not existent in citizenship. Indeed, this emotional bond is what founds the ascription of special obligations to the relationship. He says:

²⁷ Wellman, “Friends, Compatriots, and Special Political Obligations,” p. 221.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

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[I]t is the intimacy and emotional intensity among intimates that is thought to generate the necessary moral steam; our readiness to posit special responsibilities among friends stems from a belief that these features of a relationship are morally significant ...²⁹

The absence of this “moral steam” in the relationship of citizenship drives home the difference between citizenship and friendship. The citizenship relationship need not have an emotional bond in order to flourish. Citizens do not need to like each other or have any form of affection for the relationship to exist. In addition to these two features, there are deeper aspects of the dissimilarity between the two institutions. One is that we generally see our friends as extensions of who we are. Our friend is someone that we like, someone that is like us and/or someone that is like the way we wish to be. Even though we may be different from our friends, there are things that we have in common with them and these things bring us together. A common cause of friends’ drifting apart is that persons evolve into very different people and no longer have a common ground on which to found the friendship. The changes that occur in the individual lives of friends thus affect the friendship. These changes can make it stronger or indeed signal its demise. However, citizenship is not structured in this way. We are fellow citizens to persons with whom we may have no similar interests.³⁰ In some cases, citizens of the same country may speak different languages and not be able to communicate with each other in the absence of an interpreter. And although we may have friends among the citizens in the country, for the analogy to work, we would need to be friends with *every* member of the state. Also, with friendships, we have to know our friends and even know them more than others do. A characteristic of friendship is that we stand in a position to the person that is closer than other persons. We know things about them that other people do not. And in closer degrees of friendships, secrets are shared and these secrets create the boundaries of the friendship from the rest of the world.³¹ With citizenship, however, most citizens do not even

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ It may, however, be argued that things like security and democracy may constitute similar interests in this regard, but they still differ from the way in which they could be characterized in friendships. I am grateful to Richard Ireland for pointing this out to me.

³¹ Cocking and Kennett refer to this as constituting a “secrets view of friendship.” See Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, “Friendship and the Self,” *Ethics* 108 (1998), pp. 502-27. For more on the significance of self-disclosure in friendship, see Laurence Thomas, “Friendship,” *Synthese* 72 (1987), pp. 217-36.

know the names of a substantial number of their fellow citizens let alone more about them, or indeed significantly more about them to attract the notion of a friendship.

Another aspect of the emotional web that exists in friendships and is absent in citizenship is the desire to share our lives with our friends. We want to share the good times and bad times with them. We desire to do things with them and interact with them in different ways. This desire is absent in citizenship relationships. We may work with fellow citizens but do not wish to extend the area of interaction to our personal lives. Unlike co-workers who communicate with each other in order to work together, friends relate with each other because they want to. They do not do so because they need to. Thus, interaction between friends is constitutive of the relationship and not a means to an end. It is because we share our lives with our friends that we want them to be there for us when we need them most. From this flows the obligation to assist a friend in her time of need. This is because friends share their lives with each other and this includes the good times and the bad times. The obligation flows from the emotional constituent of the relationship. There is, however, a need to draw a distinction between “expectation-obligation” and “demand-obligation.”³² This is a diminutive but significant distinction with relation to friendships. The obligation, for instance, of Joe to visit Jamie who has taken ill and is in the hospital is not the sort that is demanded as a result of the relationship. It is only an obligation that is *expected* by Jamie. But it can be argued that it is of no less stringency since if Joe failed to visit Jamie without good reason, it would put a strain on the friendship.

The significance of this distinction is not to ascribe less weight to friendship obligations but to show that they differ from the sort of obligations that the state can require of its citizens. Political obligations can in different ways be demanded by the state. One of the ways in which the obligation to obey the law, for instance, is required is through the attachment of punitive notions in the law. With relation to contractual obligations, some have argued that the existence of a remedy creates two types of obligations with relation to contracts. Lord Diplock in *Photo Production v Securicor* refers to the creation of primary and secondary contractual obligations as a result of the duty to pay damages upon breach of contract.³³ Contracting parties can therefore choose to be bound by either a duty to perform the contract or a duty

³² For a discussion of the notion of rights in friendships and close-knit communities, see Michael Meyer, “Rights between Friends,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 89 (1992), pp. 467-83.

³³ *Photo Production v Securicor* (1980) AC 827.

to pay compensation on breach. This disjunctive description of contractual obligation has been used with relation to penal law where the nature of the obligation imposed by a penal law is characterized as being either to obey the law or face punishment. For John Finnis this description of legal obligation detracts from the positive role of law, which he holds to be the promotion of the common good.³⁴ Even though the law can be seen as giving disjunctive obligations, it is not the aim of law to do so and judges do not interpret legal rules in a disjunctive way.³⁵ This is further evidenced by the existence of a civil wrong to incite a party to breach a contract.³⁶ However, this lies in the face of the theory of efficient breach where contracting parties are encouraged to breach when it is more economically beneficial to do so than to perform. The aim of the law, however, remains for the most part to encourage compliant behavior, and this for Finnis is a better way to view the purpose of the law in society. He says:

[T]he social importance of law ... derives not only from its ability to mould the 'bad man's' practical reasoning, but also from its capacity to give all those citizens who are willing to advance the common good precise directions about what they *must* do if they are to follow the way authoritatively chosen as the common way to that good³⁷

Law is aimed at supplying reasons to perform and not threats for non-compliance. To describe law through the perspective of punishment is to reduce its content and to ignore the ideal to which it should aspire. For Finnis "the law's ambitions are higher than this" and a much broader description (though still including punishment for non-compliance) would better depict the nature of law.³⁸ However, even within a broad conception, the role of punishment as a tool for required performance is still significant.

Friendship obligations, however, are not required in this way. Even though friends sometimes react to each other in a way that shows displeasure and which could be characterized as punishment for something the friend

³⁴ John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 325.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

must have done or failed to do, the fluidity of this kind of “punishment” cannot give rise to the sort of disjunctive characterization we see in contractual obligations or penal law. Friendship obligations are generally not demanded in this way. They are rather hoped for by persons who are in a friendship. Indeed, declaring obligations may put a strain on the relationship. Though friends are aware that obligations exist between them, they do not see the relationship in terms of the duties they have toward each other. These duties merely flow from the emotional element that composes the friendship. To claim obligations is indeed to threaten the relationship and to impose a reductionist conception that may defeat the ascription of friendship to the relationship.

Yet another aspect of the emotional element of friendship that is relevant for the obligations that arise from friendships is the requirement of trust that friends have toward each other. Friends expect to trust each other. This trust creates the safe moral and psychological environment from which obligations can emanate. When friends trust each other they are able to do things for each other without feeling manipulated or taken advantage of. They trust that their friends would do the same for them if the positions were reversed. This trust arises from the much deeper knowledge of each other that they share and the belief that the relationship is based on truth as it relates to self-disclosure. A friend who lies is not trusted and this affects whatever obligations that could arise from the relationship. But citizenship is not structured in this way. The requirements of truth and trust are not basic features of relations among citizens. It does not significantly affect the relationship of citizenship if a citizen is lied to by a fellow citizen. It can of course be argued that if that fellow citizen is the president of the state or holds any another public office, the requirements of truth and trust become important. However, apart from the fact that the nature and degree of truth and trust differ in this context, they are not required as part of an emotional element but as part of a political one. It is a requirement of democracy that places public officers under a duty not to lie to those whom they serve. For friendship, however, the source of this requirement is emotional and not political.

The second strand of the argued similarity between friendship and citizenship is that both relationships have intrinsic value. The feature of intrinsic value gives rise to obligations, and fulfilling these obligations is constitutive of the good of the relationship. They are special to the relationship because they are derived from the relationship and are not owed to others. In the next section I shall examine to what extent friendship is intrinsically valuable and also whether citizenships are similar to friendships in this way. I then argue that even if friendship is intrinsically valuable and citizenship is similarly valuable, this conception of value does not explain the

necessity of action. I then show how a non-intrinsic value account can better address it.

5. Action and Intrinsic Value

A relevant question with relation to the nature of the value of friendship is whether we need friendship to live a worthwhile life. Is it possible to live a worthwhile life without friendship? The answer to this question can inform us as to the way in which friendship is valuable to persons. For Aristotle, the answer is that we cannot. We need friendship to have a full and happy life. According to him, “without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.”³⁹ Friendship for him is central to having a worthwhile existence. To be friendless is not desirable even when one has all other things that can be considered good. However, how true is this claim? If friendships, as we see, carry obligations and expectations, is having no friends not less burdensome? It can be argued that one can go through life without having interactions as close as friendships and still be able to live happily and most especially peacefully.

Friendships may make one’s life happier, but they can also make one’s life miserable and frustrating. The obligations of friendships are not always clear and this can lead to misunderstandings and problems. Also, the fluidity of the institution of friendship is such that it can easily be affected by the slightest of things. Friends can be given to jealousy, envy, and manipulation. They are also capable of threatening the autonomy of persons and their capacity for growth within the limits of a friendship. Since change in persons affects the relationship, friends are not truly free to explore other aspects of their character apart from those that are emphasized in the friendship. Also, friendships need a fair amount of time devoted to them to ensure that they continue. Though there are obvious benefits that can be derived from friendships, the effort required to make them work can be seen as being on par with, if not exceeding, the benefits. What can, however, be conceded is that friendships are valuable to those who have them. Friendship is not intrinsically valuable to everyone. Its value is attached to those who have friends, and the value emanates therefrom.

Although this is a simplistic and somewhat narrow account of friendship, it does show some aspects of friendship that threaten an intrinsic value account based on what attributes it can produce in persons, as Mason argues. Friendship can also produce some not very good attributes in persons

³⁹ D. P. Chase, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Combe, Pickard and Latham, 1930), p. 219. Cooper argues that Aristotle’s characterization of friendship can be interpreted as giving two arguments aimed at showing the intrinsic value of friendship; see John M. Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” *Philosophical Review* (1977), pp. 290-315.

and this can equally mean that it is intrinsically bad. Friends can have goals that are immoral and/or damaging to other persons in the society. Because of the different uses it can be put to, friendship may not always be intrinsically good. However, even if for the sake of argument, we concede that friendship is intrinsically good, to what extent is citizenship similarly valuable? One can be a citizen of a country whose government is tyrannical and whose policies are detrimental to everyone. Citizenship of such a country cannot be intrinsically valuable. Though citizenship, as it is argued, does give persons a sense of belonging and a place to reside throughout the course of their lives, this abstract conception of citizenship detracts from the reality of some experiences where persons are forced temporarily or permanently to relinquish their citizenship of a country because their lives or the possibility of living a worthwhile life is threatened. Citizenship at its best does guarantee a sense of belonging, but it can also mean a lot of suffering for the members of a country where freedom and equality of persons are not taken seriously. For such persons, citizenship becomes something to be despised and not valued. However, there are persons who value their citizenship and are, in accordance with this value, patriotic. They are willing to defend their country as well as to do what they can to promote its well-being. This emanates from the value they accord to citizenship. Similar reactions cannot be expected from persons who do not value their citizenship in this way. The other side of citizenship shows, as with friendship, that citizenship derives its value from persons. Where persons value their citizenship of a country, it is valuable to them. In other words, citizenship, like friendship, is only valuable when persons ascribe value to it.

However, even if it is still conceded that both friendship and citizenship are intrinsically valuable, to what extent does this kind of value explain the necessity of action? How does it justify the charge that action is necessary, that is, obligatory? Where both institutions are valuable in this way, it is unclear what the necessity of action is. In other words, since both types of relationships are already intrinsically valuable, the role of action with relation to them seems weak. However, within the extrinsic value account I propose, action is an instrument of value—because we value our relationships, we act. The way we value our relationships makes action necessary. *It makes us obligated.* Action becomes expressive of the value we ascribe to the relationship. Intrinsic value with relation to citizenship or friendship makes for unfair situations, where these relationships are not beneficial or are indeed harmful to persons. The non-intrinsic value account, however, makes action necessary only when the agent finds the relationship valuable to him. He does not derive his sense of obligation from a universal conception of friendship, but from what *that* friendship means for him.

However, an objection that readily arises from deriving special obligations even from such a non-intrinsic value account is how this

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conception of value places us under obligations to certain specific persons even in a situation where some other person is more in need of our help. Suppose that I am due to meet my friend Joe and I just witness an accident in which I am the only available person to help the injured person get to the hospital. It can be argued that since Joe is my friend, the obligations I owe him outweigh any obligations I may be seen to owe to this complete (albeit injured) stranger. However, the non-intrinsic value account given grounds to a provisional and not absolute obligation. It is part of the aim of the account to give a justification of special obligations to friends, but it is not aimed at being taken as an absolute conception to be applied strictly to every particular situation where such a dilemma may arise. I do have obligations to Joe that I do not owe to any other persons and which are derived from my friendship with him, but this is only a provisionally universal conception of my obligation to him. Joe may not think me a better friend if I told him I passed up assisting an injured person in order to keep my promise to meet him. The particular situation calls for a revision of the conception in order to derive the best course of action to take. In trying to save the life of the injured stranger, I am not valuing my friendship with Joe any less. I only value my friendship less if I fail to turn up for the meeting without good reason. Here, the failure to act is representative of how I value the relationship. The necessity of turning up is tied to the value I have for the friendship. Value *motivates* me to act to further the relationship. This makes me act in furtherance of the friendship even on a day when I may not be so inclined or feel like it. Thus, if I continue to fail to keep my promises to Joe without good reason, I am not keeping the friendship—I am destroying it. Action here becomes necessary to keep the friendship which is not valuable in itself except insofar as I act and therefore ascribe it value. In other words, because I value the relationship, I act and keep it alive. The demise of value is therefore the cessation of action and thereby the end of the friendship.

However, citizenship is not structured in this way. As Wellman argues, it is not “a function of action”⁴⁰ in the way that friendship is. Although a citizenship can come to an end by an act relinquishing it (or, in the law of some countries, taking up the citizenship of another country), disobedience to law, for instance, does not cause a person to lose his citizenship. It may cause him to lose his freedom to exercise his citizenship when he is sent to prison. But he does not stop being a citizen of that country just because he has committed a crime or a civil wrong. Citizenship is not as easily determined as friendship. The duration of citizenship is relatively more certain than that of a friendship. But it can also be argued that since citizenship is not determined in this way, it differs from friendship with

⁴⁰ Wellman, “Friends, Compatriots, and Special Political Obligations,” p. 221.

respect to deriving political obligations from an extrinsic value account. Since failure to obey the law does not deny one one's citizenship, the analogy is weak.

It is necessary, however, to draw a distinction between a normative and a political conception of citizenship.⁴¹ Citizenship in its political conception is not determinable. It is to a large extent permanent for as long as the citizen and the state want it to be. But a normative conception of citizenship (from which a justification for obligation is sought) is derivable from the value relationship between the citizen and the state. That citizens are expected by law to obey the law is not contentious. What is at issue is what justification there is for this obedience. In this realm, citizenship in its normative conception is more relevant. It becomes important with respect to deriving obligations from value whether the citizen considers his citizenship to be intrinsically valuable or whether he considers it valuable to him. Whereas the political conception of citizenship is certain, how the citizen normatively conceives his citizenship is not, and this is what is relevant with respect to the justification of political obligation from value. Thus a person can legally remain a citizen of a country but not feel obligated to it in any way. It is the way that he conceives the relationship and not what it is that will motivate him to act or not to act. This is a way in which actions are normative.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that special obligations, if they exist, are best derived from a non-intrinsic value account rather than from an intrinsic value account, since the latter does not explain the necessity of action. Friendship and citizenship are dissimilar in ways that affect the obligations that are sought to be derived from them. However, both relationships can be seen as non-intrinsically valuable and still give rise to special obligations. With this account, action is an expression of the value that the agent ascribes to the relationship, and in acting he shows that he values it. Action is therefore necessary to show value.

⁴¹ Mason, "Special Obligations to Compatriots," p. 442.