FRIENDSHIP, MORALITY, AND EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

Over the last decade, anthropologists have paid increasing attention to the phenomenon of friendship, a topic that had been relatively neglected throughout the history of the discipline. As Robert Paine put it in the first systematic anthropological reflection on this form of sociality: 'Although social anthropologists themselves live lives in which friendship is probably just as important as kinship, and a good deal more problematic to handle, in our professional writings we dwell at length upon kinship and have much less to say about friendship' (1969: 505). Despite Paine's efforts to encourage anthropologists to focus more explicitly upon friendship, it took thirty years before the first volume entirely devoted to the topic appeared with the publication of Bell and Coleman's *The Anthropology of Friendship* (1999). What could account for this longstanding disciplinary neglect?

The first problem that anthropologists seem to encounter when studying friendship is that its 'uncertain boundaries (…) create tensions over the relationships to be included in the categorization' (Allan 2001: 582). Related to this is the constraint highlighted by Desai and Killick—editors of a second edited volume focusing entirely on anthropological perspectives on friendship—of 'imposing a "Western" conception of friendship on other places and people' (2010: 15). Definitional quandaries and controversies over ethnocentric biases have been at the center of anthropological debates on friendship. In an effort to avoid such biases, many authors tend toward rather underdetermined analytical definitions of friendship, preferring instead to pay attention to the variegated manifestations of the phenomenon in different areas of the world (see most chapters in Bell and Coleman [eds] 1999; Desai and Killick [eds] 2010; and the recent articles of Dyson 2010; Mains 2013; Nisbett 2007; Santos-Granero 2007; Torresan 2011). As Killick and Desai (2010: 2) put it, friendship may be interesting 'precisely because it evades definition'. Indeed, its 'fixity and fluidity in diverse social words' is often taken to be 'problematic for the [very] people that practice friendship' in those communities (ibid.).

In this special issue, we take the position that a productive pathway to better understanding the problematic and contested character of friendship, as well as the longstanding anthropological reluctance to engage it, is to examine more closely its complex entanglements with morality. That friendship and morality articulate in dynamic ways is, of course, an insight that can be traced back to the time of Ancient Greek philosophy where friendship was considered a core aspect of moral life. Refusing to take either morality or friendship as self-evident categories, however, we argue in this special volume that friendship and morality can be fruitfully brought together to generate new insights on fundamental dimensions of social life. In so doing, we specifically engage the recent so-called 'ethical turn' in anthropology (see Fassin [ed.] 2012; Faubion 2011; Laidlaw 2013; Lambek 2010; Zigon 2008).

While the 'moral weight' (Bell and Coleman 1999: 1) and the 'moral force' (Killick and Desai 2010: 2) of friendship have been pointed out, anthropological research on the experience of friendship as a core aspect of moral life is still lacking. Integrating anthropological works on friendship with the recent wave of scholarship in the anthropology of morality, we wish to show here the merits of such an analytical convergence, and its potential to open up promising new research avenues.[1]

Many contributors to the 'ethical turn' in anthropology have worked to elaborate understandings of morality and ethics that variously draw from Foucauldian (Faubion 2011; Laidlaw 2013; Robbins 2004), neo-Aristotelian (Lambek 2010; Mattingly forthcoming), and phenomenological (Jackson 2013; Zigon 2007; Throop 2010a, 2014) approaches in order to address the ways in which morality and ethics are manifest, contested, transformed, and traceable in the social world. A focus on 'ordinary ethics' (Das 2012; Lambek 2010), 'what is at stake' in individuals' everyday lives (Kleinman 2006; Parish 2014; Wikan 2013), and the dynamic articulation of political, existential, and moral assemblages (Fassin 2013; Zigon 2007, 2014) are all central thematics that have emerged from, and contributed to, such recent anthropological work. In focusing on the intersection between friendship and morality, the articles in this special volume critically engage these frameworks by ethnographically examining friendship as a particular form of 'moral experience' (Zigon and Throop 2014). In this regard, the authors pay careful attention to how it is that experiences of friendship might shed light on 'what it might be like to experience morality/ethics in the world' (Zigon and Throop 2014: 1), as well as how the 'lived predicaments, uncertainties, and quandaries that arise' (Zigon and Throop 2014: 7) in friendships (as well as in those relationships lying outside or at the threshold of them) come to shape, impact, and in part define, the contours of our moral life.

In this spirit, the contributors to this special issue have sought to address the following questions: Which moralities are foregrounded by relationships qualified as friendship? What are the moral indicators and tidemarks of friendship? On which moral traces does friendship rely, and which ones does it leave behind? Which moral conceptions and assemblages inform what counts as friendship? How does friendship inform moral experience and transformation? What is the place of friendship in ethnographic encounters? By answering these questions the articles draw attention to key convergences and divergences of friendship and morality. Indeed, while friendship and morality may go hand in hand as they reciprocally evoke and constitute each other, they also generate frictions and reciprocal disruptions. While friendships may be reworked to preserve certain moralities, or vice versa, there are also many instances where they push in opposite directions, are stretched too far, and ultimately tear each other apart.

Focusing on the intersection between friendship and morality, therefore, also points to the moral limits of friendship. When diverging conceptions of friendship and its moral dimensions collide, people are led to articulate the contours of their expectations, in the process revealing the core assumptions that underlie what friendship should ideally entail for them. In examining tensions between competing moral stances on friendship, situations may arise wherein a friendship is felt to be 'imposed' on someone or where individuals may feel 'caught' in a friendship. Such existential possibilities for inhabiting a given friendship thus challenge the view of friendship as a necessarily 'free' and 'voluntary' engagement. Accordingly, assertions of friendship and agency may be productively

approached as claims of belonging, as appeals to share a certain morality and to become entangled in certain moral commitments and obligations. In turn, such approaches draw attention to issues of membership and responsibility, foregrounding people's desires and aspirations to be connected and to relate across differences and inequalities. Thus, examinations of friendship and morality enable us to shed light on how such differences and inequalities are re-actualized and eventually transformed.

Last but not least, interest in the interrelationship between morality and friendship leads to significant reflections on the practice of ethnography itself, and to the ethnographer's relationships with research participants, which might themselves be fraught with opportunities to understand (trans)formations of friendship and morality and their ethical implications. What is the place of friendship in ethnographic encounters? Are there any merits or inherent problems in advancing a 'friendship model' of ethnography? Is it possible to be both an ethnographer and a friend? Are there moments in which friendships make ethnographic practice problematic, or vice versa?

Our path to friendship

Each of the articles included in this special issue, which work to address these various concerns in differing ways, stem from a panel we co-organized for the 2011 Annual American Anthropological Association Meetings held in Montreal, Canada. In an effort to examine more closely the various possible forms of interrelationship between friendship and morality, we intentionally brought together scholars whose ethnographic and theoretical work had already significantly contributed to the development of recent anthropological interest in both topics. From the side of the anthropology of moralities we invited contributions from Jarrett Zigon and Jason Throop. On the side of the anthropology of friendship we solicited papers from Sonja Buchberger, Valerio Simoni, and Heike Drotbohm. Douglas Hollan and Cheryl Mattingly were asked to serve as discussants for the panel, and were subsequently encouraged to propose their own articles for this special issue. Regrettably Hollan and Drotbohm were not able to participate in the volume and Zigon's original piece was published elsewhere (see Zigon 2013).

While each examines moral dimensions of friendship, the articles collected for this special issue do not propose an overarching characterization of friendship, or a unified way to look at it. The heterogeneous and at times slightly divergent takes on friendship and morality that emerge from the volume's contributions illustrate the plurality of research paths that may stem from this initial reflection on their entanglements. The different and complementary dimensions of our approaches lead us to focus more particularly on the moral struggles inherent in defining, framing, and bringing about friendship (see Simoni and Buchberger), on friendship as a vehicle for moral transformation (see Mattingly), and on the moral experience of friendship in relation to the ethnographic encounter (see Throop).

In the context of Simoni's article, we find a careful consideration of the moral challenges of establishing friendship in touristic encounters in Cuba, which result mainly from the transience of such interactions and the striking inequalities that exist between the partners involved. Simoni shows how the protagonists of these relations not only find

ways to overcome such challenges, but also how they are led to reformulate notions of friendship in the light of their experiences, hopes and aspirations, '(de)-purifying' ideals of friendship from competing notions of interested economic exchange.

Buchberger's contribution touches upon similar issues of inequality and the possibility of friendship in relationships that cut across national, cultural and economic boundaries. Her article explores the moral reasoning prompted by the ties that are established between tourists and their Maghrebi hosts via the Internet-based hospitality network Couchsurfing. org (itself a powerful vehicle of notions of friendship), and also compares the situation in Morocco and Tunisia to assess how issues of class, nationality, age or gender shape notions and experiences of friendship in these two contexts.

Shifting the focus to examine how friendship may manifest itself within families—a move that critically unsettles any account that would necessarily situate friendship outside of the bonds of kinship—Mattingly's contribution seeks to trace, ethnographically, forms of moral becoming that are made possible through the fragilities of family love. Drawing from long-term fieldwork with low-income African American families caring for children with chronic illnesses and disabilities, she examines the ways in which friendships within a multigenerational family are challenged and reimagined in the wake of a horrible injury that occurred as a result of a household accident to one of the children.

Finally, Throop's article explores the issues of friendship and moral experience in the ethnographic encounter. Building upon some early observations regarding the place of friendship in fieldwork in the writings of George Devereux and Clifford Geertz, he investigates how a particularly close friendship that arose in the context of his research on the island of Yap (Federated States of Micronesia) called forth an ethical orientation of openness to the concrete, complex existence of the person who became his friend. This was an ethical orientation that resisted, and continues to resist, those reductive forms of closure and typification often required in ethnographic forms of analysis, representation and writing.

While each of the contributions to this volume therefore speaks in a distinctive voice, addressing various theoretical and empirical aspects of friendship, all of them strive to rethink friendship through the lens of moral life. In so doing, they engage, both explicitly and implicitly, with a number of important debates in the field. We now turn to examine some of the most prominent points of contact between the articles in this special issue and the broader literature on friendship in anthropology.

Ideals, aspirations and moral negotiations of friendship

A key area of controversy that has occupied much of the anthropological research on friendship, and which is addressed more explicitly in the articles of Simoni, Buchberger and Throop, relates to the ideal of equality among friends (see Killick and Desai 2010: 12–14). According to Paine (1969: 511), and at least in 'Western, middle class culture', friendship tends to be based upon equality and mutuality. This is a key feature that distinguishes friendship from, for instance, more hierarchical forms of kinship and patron-client relations (see also Allan 1989). Based on her ethnography of friendship in

London, and more particularly in Rio de Janeiro among middle-class mistresses and their maids-cum-friends, Rezende (1999: 93) suggests that 'rather than referring to equality (…) friendship should be seen as an idiom of affinity'. Such 'emphasis on affinity', considers Rezende, 'does not imply that there are no differences between friends but, rather, that stress falls on those aspects that make friends similar' (ibid.)—an important point to which we shall return below. Killick and Desai (2010: 12–14) also devote a section of their introduction to the issues of equality and debt in relation to friendship, and provide compelling evidence indicating that while the importance of equality tends to be foregrounded in friendship ideals, hierarchical separations and overt 'expectations of social and material obligation' are not always incompatible with the notions of friendship that prevail in certain ethnographic contexts.

The tensions that can arise between the affective and transactional dimensions of friendship have also been subtly addressed by Mains (2013) in his recent article on friendship among young men in urban Ethiopia. Inspired by a recent wave of scholarship on love and transactional sex—a perspective on which Simoni also builds in this issue— Mains shows how material support and affection can go hand in hand and be mutually constitutive of friendship.[2] That said, material support and affection can also be opposed and generate tensions and conflicts, notably when unbalanced sharing between friends leads to critiques of self-interestedness and instrumentality. In a context of very limited economic resources, when exchanges in a relationship are judged exceedingly one-sided, the suspicion of a 'false offering of friendship' (Mains 2013: 342) easily emerges, leading to re-qualifying relationships as economic in nature, and prompting separations between business on the one hand, and friendship on the other.

Paying attention to these tensions between friendship and commerce and to their moral underpinnings certainly helps shed light on the way people draw boundaries between them, granting privileged access to the normative expectations and dispositions that these different idioms conjure. We are confronted here with situations where 'relational work' (Zelizer 2000) is carried out, and where people try to assess what a relationship is all about. To qualify ambiguous and contentious relationships, the exchanges that take place in them are carefully scrutinized, and may be framed along the lines of different 'transactional orders' (Bloch and Parry 1989). While the circulation of money, for instance, can inform the switching of a relation from friendship to commerce (and also lead to accusations of 'false friendship', see Mains 2013), friendship itself also has the power to re-qualify the transactions that take place under its aegis. The qualification of relationships and of transactions, in this sense, goes both ways (see Simoni, forthcoming).

The articles from Buchberger and Simoni deal explicitly with these issues, as they highlight the moral dilemmas that the establishment of friendship across striking differences and inequalities in North-South tourism contexts poses to the people involved, and the moral and relational work that is required in order to overcome (not always successfully) such divides. The power of friendship in downplaying the relevance of inequality and in re-qualifying the nature and significance of economic exchanges is powerfully expressed by Latif in Buchberger's article, when the young Maghrebi argues that 'There should not be any money issues between me and my friends.' Latif refers to the fact that '"real friends" should not expect reciprocity', 'that you should give without expecting in return'. In other words, continues Buchberger, for Latif 'there is no need to create the illusion of

equality in relationships qualified as friendships between unequal partners'. This is a trope that also appears in Simoni's article. Once the eminently sentimental and disinterested character of friendship is established for Cubans making friends with foreign tourists, at an ideal level at least, material exchanges between friends should escape any sort of calculation. The idea advanced here is that friends give to each other without monitoring or measuring the balance of exchanges (see Silver 1990 on the history of this ideal in Europe).

When reflecting on the moral tensions between the affective and transactional dimensions of friendship, it could easily be argued that we are only dealing here with ideals, and that this has little to do with how things actually take place in practice. Such a disjuncture has often been emphasized in anthropological scholarship on friendship. Accordingly, the typical post-Aristotelian, Western characterizations of friendship 'as involving autonomy, voluntarism, sentiment, and freedom from structural constraints' (Bell and Coleman 1999: 10) has been portrayed as an ideal-typical model that can hardly be grounded in any actual, contextualized, ethnographic reality. Proposing another way of looking at this issue, we maintain that such models of friendship do have actual effects on the realities we study, most notably as drivers of people's aspirations, as moral demands that inform their behaviors as they strive to achieve such ideals. Such practical entailments, as well as the various relational commitments they may generate, are necessarily part and parcel of the 'ethical demands' (Zigon 2013) of friendship, no matter how idealized.[3]

As a case in point, the tensions that may arise when considering friendship in light of such ideal-actual dialectics have been rethought in some provocative ways by Willerslew (Venkatesan et al. 2011), who grounds his analysis on the notions of 'virtual' and 'actual,' concepts first advanced by Deleuze. His reflection on love and the significance of ideals of love among Siberian Yukaghir hunters shows indeed that '[t]he actual does not exist separately from the virtual', and that 'the two dimensions are given as facets of one and the same expression or reality—that is, our actual existence duplicates itself all along with a virtual existence' (2011: 228). Accordingly:

> The virtual ideal of the free gift given out of boundless love is implicitly at work in any concrete contexts of exchange, barter and even theft as an impossible phantasy or phantom ideal from which these actual transactions are given form, defined and morally judged (Venkatesan et al. 2011: 231).

For Willersley, the presence of such virtual ideals should be apprehended as an aspect of the real, as having a significant impact on reality. This is what sustains actual engagements and exchanges, which would be impossible to actualize otherwise.[4] This Deleuzian take on virtuality and actuality, emphasizing how the former may be an important driving force for the latter, also resonates with Zigon's reflections on love and the remaking of moral subjectivity, when he argues that '[a]s a motivating ethical demand (…) love guides moral experience in ways that may not always be contained by the local, as moral and ethical assemblages are always open to the possibility of the impossible' (2013: 203). The possibilities that friendship can open up in terms of moral potentiality, transcendence, and relational becoming are more clearly addressed in Mattingly and Throop's articles, and we shall return to discuss these issues in more detail in the final section below.

Circulation, flexibility and friendship

Given the moral implications that ideals of friendship can have on how friendships are given shape and experienced by our research participants, an important question has then to do with the content and substance of such models. Where do they come from? What dispositions and expectations do they encourage? Contrasting 'the flexibility and ambiguity associated with friendship' (Mains 2013: 343), with the more explicit and prescriptive narratives that inform relations between lovers in urban Ethiopia, Mains points to 'the lack of a global discourse concerning "true love" among friends' (ibid.). As Mains explains:

> Although young men do have concerns about reciprocity among their friends, they have no popular media-based discourse in which to frame these concerns. This enables greater flexibility within friendships, as friends have more freedom to define the terms of their relationships without reference to broader discourses concerning romantic love or material exchanges between men and women. (2013: 344)

For Mains, such disconnection from 'global popular discourses' on friendship helps explain its greater flexibility as compared to relationships among lovers. While his argument is very convincing in relation to the Ethiopian context of his research, Simoni and Buchberger's contributions to this volume show that globalizing models of friendship, and the moral demands that go with them, do also circulate, and have a powerful influence on how friendships are brought about, negotiated, criticized and experienced. In Buchberger's case, the international organization Couchsurfing.org is a powerful vehicle for the dissemination of globalizing models of friendship, one that appears to draw heavily on longstanding European ideals. In the case of touristic Cuba, we may similarly think of the friendship models that tourism promotion material and other global tourism narratives mobilize, which inform tourists' expectations on the matter and are in turn shared with the Cuban men and women with whom they interact.

Models of friendship and, more particularly in this case, globalizing ideals of 'pure friendship', do circulate in these touristic contexts and transnational contact zones, and can constitute a first communicational bridge, a kind of 'lingua franca' (Mattingly 2006; cf. Mattingly this issue), for the people involved.[5] But what should also be highlighted here is the likely coexistence of more than one such ideal, and the confrontations and ensuing transformations that such coexistence can engender. And even when the people forming relationships in transnational contact zones seem to share similar friendship ideals, slightly different understandings can easily emerge once we move away from the most superficial and stereotypical assumptions on which they initially converge. As Simoni clearly shows in his article, it is precisely when diverging conceptions of friendship and its moral dimensions collide that people are led to articulate the contours of their expectations, revealing, in the process, the core assumptions that underlie what friendship should ideally entail for them. It is also in these controversial moments of potential 'moral breakdown' (Zigon 2007, 2008, 2013) that friendships may become 'hot entanglements' (Callon 1998; Strathern 2002) fraught with possibilities to redefine what is going on and the type of relationship at stake. In situations such as these, moral experiences of friendship may be made more explicit, as ethical frameworks that are then actively worked

over by the protagonists involved. In this sense, while people may initially converge on preconceived notions of friendship, relationships themselves provide a context in which these models and formats are re-negotiated, and where new configurations of friendship and morality can also emerge.

When confronted with different ideals and moral assumptions about friendship, what is also important to consider is that each of them carries its own connotations, scalar imaginings and relative power—connotations that tend to resonate with the balance of power between the parties involved. Thus, in both Buchberger and Simoni's articles we find that the 'purified' version of friendship (the typical 'Western model' as described in much of the anthropological literature on friendship) ascribed to Western tourists by their Cuban and Maghrebi 'hosts', is precisely the version to which the latter also tend to aspire. Bringing such analytical insights into our reflections on friendship helps us move beyond the critique of 'purist' interpretations of friendship as overly idealistic and detached from reality, raising instead an altogether different set of questions, such as: what do people want to tell us when they profess 'pure' friendship? What sort of recognition are they striving for?

This is where recent scholarship in the anthropology of love can provide us with a very useful point of comparison, as Mains (2013) has also recently argued (see Zigon 2013; as well as Simoni's, Mattingly's and Throop's contributions to this volume). Perhaps most notably in this regard, the emerging anthropological literature on love shows how the ability to engage in 'romantic', 'selfless', 'pure' love can become, in certain ethnographic contexts, a marker of modernization, and of being an autonomous and self-determined subject (see for instance the articles in Cole and Thomas [eds] 2009; Hirsch and Wardlow [eds] 2006; and Padilla et al. [eds] 2007, as well as the writings of Povinelli 2006; Patico 2009; Faier 2007; Hunter 2010). As Povinelli (2006: 17) argues, it is precisely in love—and possibly also in 'purified' models of friendship, we may add—that one may 'locate the hegemonic home of liberal logics and aspirations'. According to this view, 'the ability to "love" in an "enlightened" way becomes the basis (the "foundational event") for constituting free and self-governing subjects and, thus, "humanity"' (Povinelli 2004 cited in Faier 2007: 153; see also Ahmed 2010). What emerges from Buchberger and Simoni's articles are calls by Maghrebi and Cuban men and women to be recognized as capable of the kind of purified version of friendship they assume holds currency among tourists and in the tourists' countries of residence. Such declarations of friendship, and the moralities and subjectivities that go with it, should therefore also be recognized for their 'aspirational qualities' (Moore 2011), as claims of 'membership' in a 'global society' (Ferguson 2006) from which people may feel excluded and marginalized.

This leads us to address again, but in another guise, the issue of equality. Accordingly, in Maghrebi and Cuban affirmations of friendship to tourists (or in some at least), equality may be read as referring first of all to an equal moral status among fellow human beings (see Rezende 1999) who claim equal capacities in terms of their emotional interiority (see Faier 2007). What is also important to recognize here, is that such morally inflected aspirations to equality have then the potential, by way of the 'true' friendship that they strive to conjure up, to bring about concrete changes at a more practical and material level as well. This is how, in the contexts examined by Buchberger and Simoni, 'true' friendship with tourists may provide both moral gratification and satisfaction in terms of widening one's

sense of belonging, as well as opportunities to improve material conditions. Ultimately, friendships have the potential in such contexts to reduce perceived inequalities both at a moral and material level.

This line of reasoning, which highlights the importance of recognizing people's aspirations and claims for recognition (even when these run counter to our political desires and possible fascination with 'hybridity', see Piot 2010), warns us against any excessive emphasis in uncovering 'localized' versions of friendship. Importantly, it also speaks to analytical efforts to render friendship 'impure' (Coleman 2010). Indeed, while we certainly recognize the importance of local contexts and the way these inform constructions of friendship, and do not wish to deny the prevalence, in practice, of 'impure' forms of friendship, we also need to pay attention to the virtualities, aspirations and grounded efforts to achieve more 'purified' ideals that may also arise in these contexts (cf. Simoni, this issue). In this sense, ethnographic efforts at contextualization should also lead us to recognize the concrete issues that lie behind idealized claims and versions of friendship. It may precisely be in contexts of inequality like those examined by Simoni and Buchberger that we find much eagerness and anticipation toward a universalist model of friendship that signals equal membership in 'first class' global citizenship and humanity. This frame of legibility, in turn, opens up promising paths for research on friendship by illuminating how processes of globalization operate at the intimate and subjective level, shedding light on related issues of membership, exclusion, power and belonging.

Friendship, singularity and moral becoming

To dismiss the relevance of our research participants' aspirations to 'true' and 'pure' friendship is thus to deny them a key dimension of possible self-experience. It also obscures the importance of the sort of moral experiences and transformations that we wished to highlight in this special issue. Such closure of people's self-proclaimed potentialities, most commonly in life-worlds dominated by material imperatives and concerns, can also easily lead to the kind of reductive and typologizing endeavor that is at the core of Throop's critique, a closure that is also addressed in Mattingly's critical assessment of commonly held assumptions on 'the normative constrictions of the everyday' (Mattingly, this issue: p. 60). In contrast to the ethnographies of Simoni and Buchberger, where the qualification of friendship was at the center of research participants' controversies, neither Mattingly nor Throop elaborate on its local conceptualization, focusing instead on the moral demands that friendship creates. The analytical move here is not to interrogate directly the conception of friendship itself, but to shift toward an explicit examination of ethics, morality and moral transformation as seen through the lens of friendship.

Introducing the philosopher Stanley Cavell's 'theory of moral perfectionism and friendship' (Mattingly, this issue: p. 54), and illustrating its potential for anthropological reflections of moral transformation in ordinary life, Mattingly's article provides new frames of legibility for understanding relations between intimacy and the everyday. Moving beyond the utilitarian and deontological moral traditions that have long dominated Western thought, Mattingly's use of Cavell's theory of moral perfectionism shows 'the place of friendship as an *essential* feature of moral life' (Mattingly, this issue: p. 55). Her analysis of

friendship as an aspect of family love is ethnographically grounded in a case that Mattingly draws from the longitudinal research she co-ran on African American families with children with significant illnesses and disabilities (Mattingly 2010; forthcoming). Sidestepping conventional distinctions between friendship and kinship, Mattingly considers how the friendship-like relation between a mother (Sasha) and her own mother (Delores) becomes fundamental in the process of moral transformation and re-orientation that follows a traumatic event within the family. As Mattingly shows, it is the conversation with a friend—a highly interpersonal dynamic that is 'essential for reflective self-consideration' (Mattingly, this issue: p. 56)—which opens the path to reframing a moral way of being. Her reflection on the 'moral ordinary', and on its often neglected complexity, reveals it as a 'space of potentiality' (Mattingly, this issue: p. 61) in which friendships play a crucial role, a privileged vehicle to respond to the ongoing calls for moral transformations that everyday life puts upon us.

Mattingly's interventions here are in line with her broader theoretical attempts to advance a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to morality that foregrounds the 'experimental uncertainty' of individuals' struggles for a 'good life' in the context of the singularities of circumstance that define the very fabric of the everyday (see Mattingly 2010, 2012, forthcoming). That friendship is a key modality through which such struggles, uncertainties, and singularities become evident in the context of ethnographic fieldwork is one important lesson to be learned from Mattingly's interventions. That moral transformation may be mediated through those forms of sociality potentially included within the possible range of experiences entailed in friendships, is yet another.

The recognition of potentiality and openness as a fundamental feature of our lives and subjectivities, and the importance, in a relation of friendship, to mutually recognize and respect such complexity, avoid reductionist interpretations, and abstain from typifications and generalizations that are ultimately a 'negation of existence', is at the center of Throop's article. Reflecting on his own experience of friendship with Maffel, his adopted Yapese father, Throop confronts us with fundamental issues of ethnographic representation and its limits, addressing the question of whether we can ever truly write ethnographically about our friends. This enables him to re-consider the thorny issue of asymmetry in fieldwork, what Geertz (1968: 5–6) phrased as 'the inherent moral tension between the investigator and his subject' and the 'ethical ambivalences that arise from the "vocational ethic" to which anthropologists must subject themselves'. With his reading of Devereux (1967), Throop brings such reflections on the anthropologists' ethical and professional stances a step further, highlighting the risks inherent in 'segmental' representations of the other that—while often the 'least morally problematic and anxiety provoking for the ethnographer'—end up reducing its interlocutors 'to partial representations of their full humanity' (Throop, this issue: p. 72). Friendship in such a case, as much as love, may thus provide individuals a possible space wherein 'an *existential orientation* to the complexity, dynamism, and uniqueness of *actual persons* is possible in the ethnographic encounter' (Throop, this issue: p. 73).

Is friendship then the route to avoiding reductionist interpretations of our interlocutors in the field? Building on Gell's (2011) reflection on love, Throop addresses the dimensions of concealment and secrecy as constitutive elements of friendship, which leads him to argue that:

while friendship, and friendships, potentiate intimacies, relationships, and forms of social knowing that would otherwise remain forever removed from the ethnographic gaze, friendship itself, however, both eludes and precludes the forms of typification, inscription, generalization, and public revealing that are necessary for ethnography (Throop, this issue: p. 75).

Throop also highlights the importance, in a friendship of virtue (Aristotle 1985), of maintaining mutual openness and vulnerability towards each other, of respecting one's 'singularity, particularity, mystery, and uniqueness' (Throop, this issue: p. 77)—an endeavor that once again precludes any reductive rendering of friends—that he sees as foundational to friendship. This approach to friendship converges with the 'ethics of representation' advocated by the existentialist philosopher Emmanual Levinas (1987), and points to the limits and difficulties of writing ethnographically about our friends.

The perspective developed by Throop resonates with the remarks made above about the importance of recognizing, without condescension, our research participants' claims and aspirations, even when they counter our most cherished epistemological assumptions, political desires and suppositions. In relation to some of the examples presented in Buchberger and Simoni's articles, for instance, a rather common interpretative posture—and one that tourists often deploy—would be to judge someone's friendship as 'instrumental', or as a mix of 'interest' and 'affect', because we either assume, or have observed, that friendship in a strikingly unequal context is most likely driven by some measure of self-interest, utilitarian considerations, and prospects of material gain. When seen in this light, we could easily be led to dismiss Cuban or Maghrebi professions of 'true' friendship as simple illusions or fabrications that will not stand the test of concrete reality. Throop's insights warn us against any hasty, generalized and univocal adoption of such a line of reasoning, and encourage us to remain receptive and respectful of our interlocutors' claims and potential ways of being, in all their multifaceted complexity.

Throop's reflections on friendship and morality in the ethnographic encounter thus offer some fundamental general lessons about an ethics of fieldwork, the relationships we establish with our research participants, and the way we write about it. This raises important questions and dilemmas in relation to the way in which we portray and characterize others and their lives. Warning against over simplistic and uni-dimensional typifications, it encourages us always to maintain an openness to the complex integrity of the other (Throop, this issue: p. 76), a complexity that found expression, for instance, in the multifaceted enactments of friendship examined in Simoni and Buchberger's articles, or in the intimate relations between existential uncertainties, moral transformation and friendship in Mattingly's piece.

To conclude, we believe that the various approaches to friendship and morality advanced in this special issue support Killick and Desai's recent observation that the anthropological study of friendship can be a rewarding means by which to uncover 'how contradictory models of personhood (and thus of relations between persons) do exist alongside one another' (2010: 11). As the contributions to this special issue demonstrate, such a focus on friendship can also be significantly implicated in a generative rethinking of the contours, possibilities and aims of anthropological theorizing and practice itself. Exploring the analytical articulations of friendship with morality, we hope that this special issue makes some modest steps toward opening novel paths to examining how a plurality

of ways of relating to others, and of being a moral person, can be brought about, acted upon, transformed, and even at times transcended via friendship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

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[1] Recent interest in friendship and morality, much like the recent interest in the arguably closely related topics of empathy (see Throop 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Hollan 2008, 2012; Hollan and Throop 2008, 2011), wellbeing (Mathews and Izquierdo [eds] 2009), hope (Crapanzano 2004; Mattingly 2010; Miyazaki 2004; Zigon 2009), and care (see Garcia 2010; Kleinman 2012, Stasch 2009), also importantly contribute to what Joel Robbins has recently identified as a broad paradigmatic shift in anthropology toward the development of 'Anthropology of the Good' (see Robbins 2013).

[2] Drawing on Malinowski and Mauss's reflection on gift giving to reassess the opposition between love and reciprocity, Povinelli, cited by Venkatesan, considers more generally that 'reciprocity is not cold calculation, but fully engaging of the passions—desire, affection and love' (Venkatesan et al. 2011: 212). As such, 'the separation between love and reciprocity, and the qualities, essences and manifestations of each, is itself sociological—a separation that is worth exploring and not just accepting' (ibid.).

[3] To this end, idealized claims of friendship can also be fruitfully apprehended through the analytical lens of 'performativity' (Callon 2007), whereby '[t]he success or failure of an act of language becomes clear only at the end of the tests to which it is put, through the cooperation it triggers, the oppositions and controversies it generates' (Callon 2007: 330). Writing about the ethical nature of human endeavours as related to both speech and action, Lambek considers similar dynamics when he argues that 'every utterance entails a commitment to our words', so that 'we are continually put to test to keep, as it were, our promises' (2010: 63).

[4] The implications of this change of perspective for anthropology may be very profound, according to Willersley: 'A good deal of anthropology's misinterpretations derive from the fact that it has focused almost exclusively on the actual reality of gift giving, with all that this entails of reciprocity, circulation, recognition and gratitude, thus blinding it to the importance of its virtual condition – the impossible ideal of the free gift. For the same reason, anthropology has been incapable of talking about love, pure and simple, but has reduced its nature to its actual manifestations in specific cultural, historical and political contexts. Anthropology will reach its analytical climax only at the moment that it invents a form of thinking that is capable of bypassing the actual and advancing into the virtual ideality of reality itself.' (2011: 232)

[5] Following Glick Schiller, we may argue that these 'globally circulating ideas' about relationships can both 'normalize oppressive regimes or provide charters for struggle' (2006: 10). It is only through ethnographic analysis of how these relationships operate, and of the challenges and opportunities they present for the protagonists involved, however, that the nature of their impacts and potential to improve people's lives may ultimately be assessed.

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