

## 2015 PLATO ESSAY CONTEST

*Is friendship a more important value than honesty? To respond to the question, consider this scenario: two high school students, Jamie and Tyler, who have been close friends since elementary school, have been brought before the school disciplinary committee because Jamie cheated on a term paper and Tyler had known about it. Jamie lies to the committee, stating emphatically that he did not cheat on the term paper. Should Tyler lie also or tell the committee the truth?*

### **SYRA MEHDI - WINNER**

Noble and Greenough School, Dedham, MA

*Syra Mehdi, is a 15-year-old high school sophomore at Noble and Greenough School. Syra enjoys a wide myriad of interests and abilities, which helps her enjoy, explore and excel at her skills in two differing worlds: Arts and Sciences. She is an accomplished singer and actress, and interested in Human Genomics.*

### **Aristotle's Theory of Friendship tested**

The question of whether Tyler should lie to the school's disciplinary committee about his longstanding friend's cheating is problematic and a classic case of competing and conflicting loyalties and obligations. Much of the difficulty stems from the fact— apparently, though this is not stated explicitly in the above scenario—that Tyler did not himself cheat, and is therefore being expected to report on the academic dishonesty of another student, his close friend. Given the difficult situation Tyler is thereby placed in, maybe it would be best to unpack the central but ambiguous issue in the above statement of his dilemma—namely, *should* he lie to protect his friend.

'Should' can be understood in several ways. In the strongest sense, it is a question of moral *ought* or obligation—is Tyler morally obligated to lie on behalf of his friend? While it seems intuitively obvious that one can never have a moral obligation to act immorally, the issue may more complicated than it seems at first blush. While certain philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant,<sup>1</sup> insist that one must never lie under any circumstances, most people recognize extenuating circumstances under which lies may be regarded as morally permissible. For example, there are 'white lies,' that is lie where one does not tell the truth, or the full truth, in order to spare the feelings or sensibilities of another, for instance, telling someone you like their new haircut, even if it's awful; telling grandma you like the sweater she knitted you for Christmas. These types of lies are generally seen as permissible so long as they are not intended towards any manipulative or exploitative ends on the part of the person telling them, but rather are told for the (mild) benefit and good feelings of their recipient. Understanding that Tyler is not himself accused of cheating, any lie on his part would only be for the benefit of his friend. Would it thereby constitute a 'white lie'? Maybe, but maybe not. Another defining feature of 'white lies' besides their other-directedness is their general innocuousness; they are lies that typically concern a relatively minor and trivial matter, but also one that is morally isolated and does not itself have the potential to harm or create further moral problems. Telling a child that Santa Claus exists is a widely seen as a socially permissible 'white lie,' one very different from telling a child that a monster lives under their bed who

---

1 See Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals," in Mary J. Gregor

will eat them in their sleep. Or, to take another example, telling someone that a ridiculous outfit they love looks nice would generally be considered a ‘white lie,’ but telling them the same right before they wear it to a job interview would probably not be. The difference between these two is the issue of *harm*. Academic dishonesty is not a minor matter, and the existence of cheating harms both the value and respectability of higher education. Thus, even though Tyler’s lie would be other-directed in purpose, it would nonetheless concern a serious matter and serve to conceal a serious and overall harmful offense. It would not, therefore, be a ‘white lie.’

However, there is another class of lies that are generally seen as permissible specifically because they are other-directed and concern a serious matter. For example, if during WWII someone in occupied Europe was sheltering a family of Jews in their house and one night Gestapo agents knocked at the door and inquired if there were any Jews there, most people would not only not *fault* the person for lying, but would see lying to the Gestapo agents as morally obligatory. In this case it is precisely the seriousness of the consequences *to others* of not lying that makes all the difference. Possibly, if his friend were to face expulsion or similar consequences which could jeopardize his entire future, Tyler might feel himself in a similar situation, especially if the paper in question was a small part of the overall grade, or if there were extenuating circumstances Jamie was dealing with, or if this was the only time he knew of Jamie cheating. Unfortunately, there seems to be a critical difference between these two scenarios. In the first, the Jews hiding are entirely innocent or any wrongdoing, while those inquiring about them are Nazis wishing to kill them for no other reason than their religion and ethnic identity. In the latter case, Jamie is guilty of wrongdoing, while those inquiring into his wrongdoing are themselves on the side of right. (A more appropriate analogy would be an escaped—and guilty—fugitive hiding from law enforcement.) Though Jamie may face serious consequences, as his own immoral actions have themselves raised the threat of such consequences, the scenarios are then quite different, and Tyler cannot and should not regard himself as under any moral obligation to lie for his friend, regardless of what those consequences may be.

Another way to approach the issue would be from the perspective of Jamie rather than Tyler. That is to say: does Jamie have the *right* to ask or demand that his friend lie on his behalf? The answer to this seems more straightforward: no one has the ‘right’ to demand someone do something wrong for their own benefit, or to act against the dictates of their own conscience. Indeed, even in the extreme case mentioned above, not even the Jews in hiding would have the right to demand a lie on the part of their protector. Even though their protector might be morally obligated to lie, ‘right to’ and ‘obligation by’ are not ultimately the same thing.

What the foregoing considerations clarify is precisely what is at stake in the question of whether Tyler *should* lie to protect his friend from negative consequences. Because Jamie’s own actions have raised the possibility of such consequences, Tyler is under no moral obligation to lie; it cannot be said, therefore, that *ought* to lie. Moreover, insofar as Jamie’s offence was a serious breach of conduct with serious implications, any lie on Tyler’s part would not be an innocuous ‘white lie’ devoid of moral implications. The question at stake then, the ‘should’ under consideration, is: *should* Tyler’s loyalty to his friend outweigh these moral implications?

While it would be easy to answer flatly in the negative, to say that ‘One should never act immorally regardless of friendship,’ because friendship and the bonds of friendship are a central and defining

human value, one that gives life much of its meaning, perhaps the question is more difficult than that. This principle, or at least a variation thereof, is even recognized in American jurisprudence: while the State can compel truthful testimony against defendants on trial, it cannot compel spouses to testify against each other. True, testimony can be compelled against friends, but the point is that even the State, which has the power to conscript and send thousands of people to their deaths if it sees fit, recognizes certain human bonds as presenting a limit on its power, on its ability to demand the truth.

But are the bonds of *friendship* to be given priority over telling the truth?

Perhaps some clarity can be gained from Aristotle, who was the first philosopher to offer a philosophical theory of friendship. Aristotle distinguished between three different objects of love: the “good, pleasant, or useful,” which correspond to “three kinds of friendship”—friendships of utility, friendships of pleasure, and friendships of the good.<sup>2</sup> This division raises a significant question: “Do men love...*the* good, or what is good for *them*?”<sup>3</sup> The answer, for Aristotle, is *both*, and this can be seen in the different types of friendship themselves:

...those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to *themselves*, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And these friendships are only incidental.<sup>4</sup>

That is to say, these first two types of friendship are self-interested in motivation: one or both parties of the friendship are in the friendship because of what they themselves get out of it. Clearly, if this the nature of Tyler and Jamie’s friendship, then Tyler not only should not but *would not* lie on behalf of his friend, as he would receive no benefit from doing so and would potentially expose himself to consequences for doing so. Actually, Aristotle notes that young people like Tyler and Jamie often have friendships based on pleasure, and thus fall in and out of them easily, as their pleasures change.<sup>5</sup> However, Tyler and Jamie have been friends for a long time, and thus their friendship might fall under Aristotle’s third category: friendship of the good. As Aristotle explains:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in excellence; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefor their friendship lasts as long as they are good.<sup>6</sup>

In defining the nature of true friendship in this way, Aristotle also answers the central question of

---

2 NE 1156a7

3 NE 1155b21

4 NE 1156a10-17

5 NE 1156a31-1156b6

6 NE 1156b8-12

Tyler's challenge. True friendship is a bond between people who like each other "*qua* good"—that is, *out of* and *for* the goodness of their respective characters. Jamie cheated on his paper but Tyler did not, they are not "alike in excellence." Additionally, as Aristotle notes, this perfect type of friendship can last only so long as *both* friends are themselves good. As Jamie has cheated on his paper, he is not good, and thus cannot be a 'true friend' to Tyler.

Let's return, in conclusion, to the original questions: *Should* Tyler lie to protect his friend Jamie? This would not be a 'white lie,' as Jamie is the party in the wrong, it would not be a morally obligated lie, the only justification for Tyler lying would be on the basis of his friendship with Jamie. However, he cannot lie out of any 'true friendship' with Jamie since Jamie is not good, and hence not capable of such friendship to begin with. Perhaps Tyler finds Jamie to be pleasant or useful as a friend, and feels that he should lie to safeguard that aspect of their relationship. However, in doing so, Tyler would no longer be good himself, and thus would inherently deprive himself of the ability to enjoy Aristotle's 'true friendship' with *anyone at all*. Insofar as goodness is the *basis* of friendship, friendship cannot possibly be held as a more important value than honesty, since honesty is *good*. Therefore, Tyler *should not* lie for his friend; at best he could refuse to answer the committee's questions and suffer whatever consequences that refusal to cooperate entails. But regardless of what he chooses, because of Jamie's actions, he and Tyler can no longer be true friends.

## **JULIA WALTON – FIRST RUNNER-UP**

The Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Villanova PA

*Julia is a sophomore at the Academy of Notre Dame de Namur. She is a member of high-school ensemble as well as the competitive robotics and Hi-Q teams. In her free time, she enjoys classic novels and fantasy video games. She lives in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, with her family.*

### **In the Place Beyond Utility and Pleasure**

“Friendship is so tightly linked to the definition of philosophy that it can be said that without it, philosophy would not really be possible. The intimacy between friendship and philosophy is so profound that philosophy contains the *philos*, the friend, in its very name...” (Agamben 25). The concept of “friendship” has indeed been discussed and analyzed by philosophers since the beginning of the discipline—yet, as Agamben also notes, with minimal success in defining its value to the universal human condition or agreeing as to its rank in the overarching hierarchy of principles. When honesty and integrity, for example, seem to clash with the ethic of friendship, which of them wins out? The case of a student (Tyler), who, confronted by his high school disciplinary committee, must decide whether to lie to support his cheating friend Jamie, highlights this tension. Resolving the matter demands several primary considerations: What is the nature of the friendship between the two students? What are the potential consequences of telling the truth, for each student personally, for the entire community, and for the students’ friendship itself? A sound conclusion depends on how these questions are addressed.

In Book VIII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes three kinds of friendships—those based on utility, pleasure, or goodness. A friendship based on utility is one based on mutual advantage, on usefulness and advancement, while a friendship based on pleasure is one where both parties “delight in each other” on the basis of such things as quick wit or shared interests. Both of these are typically short-lived in nature; when interests change, the friendship ends. However, a friendship of goodness is rarer and arises when both parties strive for a reciprocal kind of virtue, in themselves and in the other. This kind of friendship is long-lasting, and, as Aristotle argues, can only exist when both parties are near-equal in rank or goodness. A king cannot reciprocate the same kind of well-wishing from the common man, nor can a criminal strive for the same kind of “good” as one who consistently follows the law. Therefore, this third kind of friendship supposes a sort of equal footing.

Applying Aristotle’s philosophy, if Tyler and Jamie’s friendship is of the first two kinds, there is no real dilemma: if the friendship is based on utility or pleasure, then Tyler is ethically compelled to tell the truth about Jamie, since in the first place it is likely more beneficial for him to do so, and in the second the nature of their arrangement has evidently grown no longer pleasurable. If the friendship reflects the third kind, however, the answer becomes more complex, for it is predicated on the nature of the goodness the friends are seeking.

Aristotle frequently returns to the concept of *telos*, one’s goal or purpose in life, the achievement of which depends on character and virtue and results in happiness or bliss (*eudaimonia*). This virtue itself is considered to be a “golden mean” of excess and deficiency. In striving for virtue, Aristotle argues that a man must consider his own excesses and deficiencies, and, when confronted with moral decisions, “...must incline sometimes towards the excess, sometimes towards the

deficiency; for so shall [a man] most easily hit the mean and what is right” (*NE*, Book II). Here, the tension involves navigating the excesses of scrupulosity and moral apathy. In striving to do what is best for both parties, Tyler must consider his own excesses and deficiencies, but to serve virtue, his decision should also serve each student’s *telos*. Is Jamie phenomenally gifted in critical areas, but the paper for a subject irrelevant to these? Will a possible suspension hinder his success—a success that could benefit humanity? If so, telling the truth may deliberately inhibit Jamie’s achievement of *telos*, which is as near a concept to “sin” as Aristotle ever addresses. However, suppose the situation is reversed: Is Tyler himself bound for something bigger, and are the potential consequences of lying for Jamie significant enough? In this case, lying may be a hindrance to his own *telos*.

Arguing on the basis of a teleological perspective evokes the spirit of Friedrich Nietzsche and his overman (*Übermensch*). According to Nietzsche, man’s single basic drive is the desire for power, and happiness is “the possession and creative exercise of power. ...By sublimating his impulses and employing them creatively, man can yet raise himself above the beasts and attain that unique dignity which former philosophers considered man’s birthright” (Thilly 504). The higher man or “overman” has a responsibility to think for himself; he does not subscribe to a “slave morality,” but rather, recognizes his own will to power and actualizes it. His friendships are characteristically outside the norm. “Friends,” in the usual sense, wish one the best; however, decisions based on this concept tend to hold back the overman. A true friend for the overman is one who wishes him the best by wishing him “the worst”; through opposition, both parties become stronger. “In one’s friend one shall have one’s best enemy. Thou shalt be closest unto him with thy heart when thou withstandest him” (Nietzsche 63). In this context, Tyler must consider which action leads him closer to the state of the overman.

The nature of “goodness,” then, can be said to be of a “golden mean” of virtue or of “strengthening.” Aristotle and Nietzsche are similar in that, if one course of action interferes with one’s *telos* or personal character growth, the decision must be made on that basis. However, suppose that both students’ *telos* is significantly threatened (and therefore, either decision—telling the truth or lying—may potentially hinder the *telos* of one of the two in question), or that both students have an equal right to renounce normative moral values. After all, according to Aristotle, a true friendship based on “goodness” supposes near-equality in rank or goodness. The right decision must then be made under some other logic.

If one were to evaluate the potential consequences of each action for everyone involved, not just the two students, it would be considered a Utilitarian approach. Yet, it too originates in a kind of Aristotelian friendship based on goodness. According to this philosophy, if the consequence of a particular action causes more pleasure than pain, then that action is likely to be morally sound. In his book *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill famously states that “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure” (210). He argues, though, that the actions one must take must not be based on the pleasure of oneself, but the “pleasure,” or “good,” of mankind as a whole. This is indeed what Tyler and Jamie are seeking, if we assume theirs is a third-category friendship.

Conversely, according to Utilitarian logic, lying to save a friend simultaneously fails in terms of integrity and destroys the good of the friendship. In general, both honesty and friendship are good for society, but a friendship based on honesty is best of all. This is what Tyler stands to gain; and yet, a

Tyler who consistently chooses this course—who never privileges friendship over honesty—may well end up friendless. A world full of friendless Tylers is hardly optimum. What it is, rather, is absurd. According to Albert Camus, human beings endlessly seek to understand life’s meaning, and yet, cannot find any. There is no adequate answer to the question, yet humanity has a moral imperative to keep searching anyway. This understanding of absurdism is central to Camus’ philosophy, which stems from the consequences of this paradox.

What does this mean for friendship, then? In his novel, *The Stranger*, Camus sets forth a main character, Meursault, whose primary trait is an excess of honesty; in other words, he says what is true about himself though it may be off-putting to others. He does not attempt to curb things in order to make connections with others, and due to his inability to do so, he is ultimately put to death. Only when Meursault is faced with “the benign indifference of the universe” does he recognize the humanity he shares, reflecting Camus’ main argument: that, confronted with the absurdity of the human condition, human beings *owe* connectedness to one another. In most cases, this connectedness is equal to friendship. Therefore, for Camus, this friendship—a reaching out to one another, despite everything—takes precedence over honesty.

Thus, if the friendship in question is truly of the third kind, based on mutual “goodness” (which can mean a number of things), then it presupposes an equal footing in whatever that goodness is. Tyler, poised to make a decision on behalf of Jamie, does not have a clear right to do so on the basis of a superiority in morality or character, because it does not exist. Therefore, he must act for the benefit of all, and because of the absurdity of the human condition, that benefit must be friendship. In this way, assuming a friendship based on goodness, ultimately—if paradoxically—Tyler *must* lie for Jamie. Agamben, at the close of “The Friend,” describes the crucial nature of such a relationship: “It is essential at any rate that the human community comes to be defined here, in contrast to the animal community, through a living together...that is not defined by the participation in a common substance, but rather by a sharing that is purely existential...” (36). Tyler’s decision, finally, is less about what to do than about who he is. Defining himself as a friend in Camusian terms obviates the dilemma—but that is the kind of friend he should want to be, and the rest of us would wish to have. Whatever takes place on the other side of that decision, he can know that despite meaninglessness, indifference, and paradox, there is, in the place beyond utility and pleasure, his friend.

#### Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. “The Friend.” *What is an Apparatus? And other Essays*. Ed. Werner Hamacher.

Stanford University Press, 2009. [Originally, *L’amico*, 2007.]

<<http://soundenvironments.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/agamben-what-is-and-apparatus.pdf>>.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. F. H. Peters. New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2004.

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Vintage Books, 1946. Print.

Mill, John Stuart. “Utilitarianism” (1861). *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. Gen. Ed. John M.

Robson. 33 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963-91.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. Thomas Common. 1892. *The Literature Page*.

Web. 1 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.literaturepage.com/read/thusspakezarathustra.html>>.

Thilly, Frank. "Nietzsche." *A History of Philosophy*. Ed. Ledger Wood. Rev. ed. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951. 501-07. Print.

#### References

Aronson, Ronald. "Albert Camus." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab, 27 Oct. 2011. Web. 2 Jan. 2015. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/>>.

Heydt, Colin. "John Stuart Mill." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web. 1 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/milljs/#SH2d>>.

## **BRENDAN BERNICKER – SECOND RUNNER-UP**

Radnor High School, RADNOR PA

*Brendan Bernicker is a senior at Radnor High School. He only recently begun formally studying philosophy, but I has always been interested in trying to understand the world and thinking about difficult questions. His philosophical interests include ethics, epistemology, and political philosophy. Aside from philosophy, he plays soccer, is a member of my school's Model United Nations club, and is actively involved in several community groups. He also plays guitar, bass, drums, and piano and works as a semi-professional audio engineer/producer.*

### **So Tyler, Did Jamie Cheat?**

Throughout history, many philosophers have explored the nature of the relationship between friends. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* proposes that friends "must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other." According to Aristotle, goodwill felt only by one individual toward another is not friendship because, in a true friendship, each party must have this goodwill toward the other. While Aristotle limits this reciprocity to good will, I propose that friendship also includes a component of reciprocal benefit.

Consider the example put forward in the prompt for this essay. The prompt poses the question, "is friendship more important than honesty?", and then gives an example in which one friend, Tyler, is asked to testify to a school disciplinary committee as to whether or his good friend, Jamie, cheated on a term paper. Tyler knows that Jamie did, and has to decide between lying to the committee to protect Jamie and telling the truth. The wording of the prompt implies that telling the committee the truth about Jamie, showing honesty, would be a violation of his obligation to Jamie, compromising the value of friendship. While the prompt presents these as opposed values, I do not believe that they are mutually exclusive.

The first important consideration in understanding the example put forward is that of Tyler's obligations to Jamie by virtue of their friendship. In the entry "Friendship" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Bennet Helm writes that friendship is "grounded in a concern on the part of each friend for the welfare of the other," that "friends must normally be disposed to promote the other's good for (his/her) sake and not out of any ulterior motive," and that "caring about someone for (his/her) sake involves both sympathy and action on the friend's behalf." By this definition, Tyler's obligations are to have sympathy for and act on behalf of Jamie and to promote his good out of concern for his welfare.

This leads to the first important question: "what is best for Jamie?" Because Jamie lied to the committee himself, it is obvious that he believes deceiving the committee is in his best interest; but that does not mean that it is. As his friend, Tyler ought to consider the question himself. If Tyler lies to the committee and Jamie is not punished, Jamie may continue to cheat and put himself at a long term disadvantage for failing to fully learn the material on which he is being examined and to develop the

strong work ethic that he will need later in life. If Tyler is truly concerned for Jamie's best interest, he will force Jamie to face the short-term consequences of his actions to promote the long-term development of his character.

Assume, however, that Tyler determines that lying is actually in Jamie's best interest. The question now turns to: "what constitutes sufficient 'action on the friend's behalf'?" Clearly, the answer to this question is not that Tyler must take *any* action that could be in the best interest of his friend, for the extension of this logic would justify Tyler killing the members of the disciplinary committee and anyone involved in reporting Jamie's cheating in order to shield Jamie from punishment. I doubt that anyone would think such action justified, so there must exist some limit as to what action one friend should be expected to take on behalf of another. It is possible that this limit is that a friend should take the action of least consequence to achieve a desired benefit for a friend. In this case, Tyler lying to or killing the disciplinary committee achieves the same result, but lying is the justifiable course of action because it is of less consequence. This definition too is flawed, however, because even if murder were the only way to protect Jamie, I still believe that many would find such an act indefensible unless in the case of a clearly proportionate response such as mortal self-defense.

Instead, I propose that one ought to take any *moral* action that he/she believes to be in the best interest of his/her friend. This obligation is far more reasonable, since it still requires a friend to act on the other's behalf but also protects the first friend from being compelled to take such immoral actions as those presented in the previous paragraph. To understand how this stipulation applies to Tyler and Jamie, it is first necessary to explore the morality of lying.

Most philosophers and people in general believe that lying is, in and of itself, unethical. There are, however, some lies that people tend to believe are acceptable, often called "white lies". The classic example of a "white lie" is that in which a woman asks a man if a dress makes her look fat and, although he believes that it does, he replies that it does not so as not to hurt her feelings. This lie is usually justified using Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas' "Doctrine of Double Effect". The "Doctrine of Double Effect" is often informally explained as the justification of an act in which "the good outweighs the bad". Aquinas' version is far more complex and less relevant to this example, since it actually deals with an otherwise moral action that has unintended negative consequences that are offset by the positive results of the action (McIntyre); it is more interesting to consider the idea of the good of an action outweighing the bad. In the case of this classic "white lie", the usually immoral act of lying is considered justified because the woman's feelings are protected. I would propose that this act is not justified, even under this ethical system, because protecting the woman's feelings is not really a good for the woman. She is asking so that, if the dress does make her look fat, she can change. If the man lies to her, she will still be wearing the dress that makes her look fat and the scenario she is trying to avert by asking will end up happening. Therefore, rather than a good for the woman, this lie is really a convenient way for the man to protect himself from the uncomfortable experience of telling the woman the truth. If the man is truly lying to protect the woman's self image or believes telling her the truth would cause her some great distress, then that is a separate issue and one that will be revisited later.

While I disagree with the "white lie" justification in this case, I do believe there are some lies that are justified. A commonly used example of the type of lie I support was first posed by German philosopher

Immanuel Kant, who gave an example in which a murderer comes to man's door asking if he is harboring a second man who the murderer is trying to kill. The man is harboring the murderer's target, but lies to him and says that he is not (Varden 1). I believe that in this example, it is right for the man to lie to the murderer. My justification for this is not that "the good outweighs the bad," but that it is moral for an individual to lie if the lie prevents an immoral action and is done with moral intentions.

Kant's scenario is an example in which the lie prevents an immoral action. By lying, the man at the door is preventing the murderer from killing the other man, which he would do if the man told the truth. In this case, I believe it would be immoral for the man to tell the truth, as he would essentially be partaking in the murder himself.

The other condition I have given for a lie being ethical is that it has moral intentions. This also applies to the Kant scenario, but a better example would be parents telling their children that Santa Claus is real. While it would not be immoral for the parents to tell their children the truth about Santa Claus, it is also not immoral for them to say he is real. This is because the action is intended solely to bolster the children's spirits around the holiday season and give them a reason to celebrate a holiday that is important to the parents. Unlike the man in the "white lie" example, the parents have no selfish motivations for this deceit, their motivations are purely moral and thus the act is permissible. In the case where the man tells the "white lie" to protect the woman's self image or prevent emotional distress, that would also qualify as a moral intention and thus be justifiable.

Returning to the case of Tyler and Jamie, these same conditions apply. If Tyler knew that the committee would give Jamie an unfair punishment that would not be proportional to his crime, it would be ethical for him to lie to prevent the immoral excessive punishment. This is not the case in the example, so it would not be moral for him to lie to the disciplinary committee. Because this act of lying would be immoral, Tyler would not be obligated to do it under the previously proposed idea that "one ought to take any moral action that he believes to be in the best interest of his/her friend".

Another important consideration in this case is that of Jamie's obligations to Tyler. As the other friend, Jamie has the same obligation to take moral action in Tyler's best interest. As such, he should admit to the cheating and accept the punishment to prevent Tyler from being put in the position of making the difficult decision outlined so far in this paper. Unless it would be morally defensible for Jamie to lie, such as in the example with the excessive punishment, telling the truth would be the moral action in Tyler's best interest (in the case of excessive punishment, it would be most ethical for both of them to lie for the same reasons already given). By lying himself, Jamie has destroyed the reciprocity of their friendship and failed in his obligation to Tyler. He cannot, then, reasonably expect Tyler to uphold his own obligation and lie to the disciplinary committee on his behalf.

The prompt for this essay poses the question "Is friendship a more important value than honesty?" Assuming honesty to be the virtue of not telling immoral lies, as I do not believe the action of telling moral lies to be dishonest, honesty and friendship can never truly contradict. A real friend will not expect his friend to lie on his behalf, and one who holds this expectation is not a real friend. As such, neither value can truly be more important and both are necessary and interrelated.

## **Works Cited**

Aristotle. "Nicomachean Ethics - Book Viii." The Internet Classics Archive. Trans. W. D. Ross.

N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.

Helm, Bennett. "Friendship." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, 17 May

2005. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.

McIntyre, Alison. "Doctrine of Double Effect." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford

University, 28 July 2004. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.

"Preparation: Regional Ethics Bowl Case 1" Radnor High School Ethics Bowl Club. Radnor

High School. November 2014. Discussion

Varden, Helga. "Kant and Lying to the Murderer at the Door... One More Time: Kant's Legal

Philosophy and Lies to Murderers and Nazis." Academia. JOURNAL of SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY -

Wiley Periodicals, Winter 2010. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.