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## **Aristotle on Friendship and Self-knowledge: The Friend Beyond the Mirror**

### **Abstract**

Read through the lens of modern concerns regarding shared moral perception and difference between the self and other, Aristotle's theory of primary friendship raises challenging questions regarding the role of relationships in moral self-evaluation. Aristotle's emphasis on sameness of character in his description of the virtuous friend as "another self" figures centrally in all of his arguments for the necessity of friendship to self-knowledge. Although the attribution of the *Magna Moralia* to Aristotle is disputed, the comparison of the friend to a mirror in this work has encouraged many commentators to view the friend as a mirror that provides the clearest and most immediate image of one's own virtue. I will offer my own reading of Aristotle's theory of friendship, suggesting that the friend constitutes "another self" not as a mirror image, but rather as a partner in moral perception.

Framing self-knowledge as intuitive knowledge gained through active engagement with a partner in perception who generally shares one's moral perception captures the role of primary friendship in an ethically good life more fully than the conception of a friend as a mirror. I will expand on the *Eudemian Ethics* book VII, chapter 12 argument on self-knowledge with reference to Aristotle's account of primary friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to develop this view of the relationship between friendship and self-knowledge.