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18
THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

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Philosophers have often thought friendship an important human good. Aristotle devoted two books of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to *philia*, usually translated as "friendship," as part of a flourishing life. G.E. Moore counted "the pleasures of human intercourse," which he associated with friendship, as one of his two main intrinsic goods (1903: 188). And surely common sense agrees that friendship enriches our lives while its absence, say through forced isolation, can be a serious loss. This chapter asks what gives friendship its value.

Friendship is one type of personal relationship, alongside familial love and romantic love. But all of these involve at least many of the following elements: a desire for another's happiness or, more generally, her good, along with efforts to promote it and pleasure when it is found; a desire to spend time with her plus enjoyment of her company; a desire that she, too, desire your good and company; a desire to know and be known by her; and some admiration or positive assessment of her character and actions. Not all these elements are needed for friendship or even love; one or more can be missing. But unless some are present there is surely no relationship. Which elements are most important can differ between the types. Though it is possible to love a sibling while finding her company annoying, we would not call people friends if they did not like spending time together. Unlike familial love, friendship is not usually based on biology or very early life experiences; unlike erotic or romantic love, it need not have a sexual dimension and does not as often demand exclusivity. And though friendships vary in intimacy, from lifelong best-friend ones to more casual acquaintanceships, they usually involve less intense emotions than the other types. Still, the elements they share with familial and romantic love are the main source of their value.

This value can be of three broad kinds. First, friendship can be the occasion for generic human goods, ones found in other aspects of our lives but also and even especially in personal relationships. Here it is a source of goods not exclusive to it. Second, friendship can make for distinctively valuable forms of the generic goods, so they have more value within a relationship than they do outside it. Here it intensifies values, making something that is good in relation to a stranger even better when directed to a friend. Finally, friendship can involve distinctive or non-generic goods, ones not found outside personal relationships but specific to them. Different accounts of the value of friendship emphasize different ones among these kinds; this chapter will consider them in turn.

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Friendship and Generic Goods

The least controversial view is that friendship provides goods that can also be found outside it, and for some this completely explains its value. W.D. Ross thought the basic human goods are virtue, knowledge, and pleasure and that the value of "mutual love" rests entirely on its blending "virtuous disposition of two minds towards each other, with the knowledge which each has of the character and disposition of the other, and with the pleasure which arises from such disposition and knowledge" (1930: 141; compare Telfer 1970–71: 239–41). But even views that recognize more distinctive goods in friendship ground much of its worth in its promoting generic ones like these.

Most obviously, friendship is a source of pleasure or good feeling, and that is often what initiates a friendship. You meet someone and find his company enjoyable: he makes you laugh or conversation with him is especially engaging. So you meet again, and if later interactions are similarly rewarding, you repeat them and a friendship develops. The same pleasures then persist through the friendship – you keep having engaging talks – and new ones develop. Though similar pleasures are possible outside friendship – you can laugh at a stranger's jokes or enjoy a chat with someone you'll never meet again – a friend is an especially available and reliable source of them, one it does not take effort to find and that you can almost always count on.

Other pleasures are more specific to friendship. Most of us enjoy activities we could do alone, such as watching a movie or traveling, even more if we do them with someone else, and we enjoy this especially if the other is a friend. More strongly, many of us want friends: we want there to be people who want our company and happiness as much as we want theirs. By doing so a friend gives us the warm feeling fulfillment of that desire can bring. Even when she is absent, it can be a comfort to know she cares for us; when she is present and showing her concern, the feeling is stronger. And there is a related benefit shared with familial and romantic love. Just as an infant feels safe and secure in its mother's arms, so a married couple can feel at ease and protected in each other's company, their private space a haven from an often challenging world (Wonderly 2017). Similarly if often to a lesser degree, a friend is someone you can relax with and with whom other anxieties fade. You need not worry about making a good impression and can, for a time, leave other troubles behind. While this strengthens your ability to address those troubles, it is also an intrinsically comforting respite.

At the same time, friendship can cause sorrow, for example if a friend dies or moves away or betrays you. In this it is like romantic love, which can be a source of heartache as well as of delight. But just as the good feelings in friendship are usually less intense than in romantic love, so are the bad ones. And just as the rewards of love usually outweigh its risks, so, and perhaps more securely, do friendship's pleasures outweigh its potential pains.

Friendship is also, as Ross said, an occasion for knowledge, especially of a friend's character and past. From a purely cognitive point of view, this knowledge may not have as much value as knowing, say, quantum physics or world history, but it shares some of the same good-making features. The most valuable cognitive state is understanding, where you use knowledge of more general truths, for example of scientific laws, to explain and understand more particular ones (Ross 1930: 147–8; Hurka 2020). And that is present to at least some degree when you use your knowledge of a friend's general character to explain his more specific traits and those to explain particular things he does, or combine the different things you know about him to form an integrated picture of his personality. In an admittedly more limited domain there are the same connections between things you know that make for understanding, and something similar holds for the good of achievement.

Though less prominent in philosophical writing about value, achievement is an important good in part because it is the converse of knowledge. If in knowing you make your mind match the world by forming beliefs about it that are true, in achievement you make the world match your mind by realizing a goal you have formed in it. And the features that make for more valuable achievements parallel those for knowledge, so it is better to realize more connected goals, with many serving as means to a

primary or organizing one; then achieving that goal is complex and difficult. One thing a friend can do is encourage achievements of this sort, say in your career, by emotional and even tangible support. But some achievement values are more internal to friendship.

It is arguably also better to know truths and achieve goals that are more extended, ones not limited to the here and now but involving many objects or people at many or distant times. Among other things, this gives special value to achievements that involve cooperation with others. Then at least many of your goals involve states of several people, and even if you contribute to a collective project mainly by doing your part, you do so to help make it true that the whole group acts. Though cooperative activity is possible outside friendship, it is especially common and successful within it. Friends regularly do things together, with the togetherness itself a goal, and because of their friendship can realize longer-term and more elaborately structured common goals. Their cooperation may not involve as many people as a sports team's or be as far-reaching and complex as that of a married couple raising children, but a further important good in friendship is the frequent achievement of goals that include states not just of you but also of another person, where one such goal, so far as it is intended, can be forming and sustaining the friendship itself.

The final and perhaps most important generic good in friendship and personal relationships more generally is moral virtue. An attractive view takes virtue to consist largely in caring fittingly about other, independently given goods and evils in your own and especially other people's lives (Moore 1903; Ross 1930; Hurka 2001). If another's happiness, for example, is good, then wanting her happiness, trying to promote it, and being pleased by it – what some call loving it – for its own sake is virtuous and intrinsically good; more specifically, it involves the virtue of benevolence. If her pain is evil, trying to prevent or being pained by it involves the companion virtue and good of compassion. If virtue is just a generic good, we should ideally care as much about a stranger's good as about a friend's, but most of us in fact care much more about our friends'. If we have one unit of concern for a stranger's happiness, we may have ten for a friend's, which is more benevolent and therefore better. Like familial and romantic relationships, our friendships are a part of our lives where we're most virtuous or morally at our best. Even if it would be equally good to care intensely about a stranger's good, we do so more often and to a higher degree about a friend's; we are virtuous toward him in a way we are not toward others.

If only happiness is good, benevolence toward a friend involves caring only about his having that; if knowledge, achievement, and virtue too are good, it includes concern for them. Some argue that virtuous concern for a friend also includes supporting his ends or goals, where these can be separate from and even conflict with his good. If a friend has devoted himself to improving the lives of those less fortunate at the cost of pleasure, knowledge, and achievement for himself, you should value and encourage that project as well as, and at times in preference to, his good (Ebels-Duggan 2008).

Virtue also involves wanting to act rightly and avoid wrong, and this, too, can be present to a higher degree in friendship. We are usually more averse to harming a friend or interfering with her freedom than we are to a stranger, which again is better. But this can make for heightened internal conflicts. If a friend is about to make a choice, for example of romantic partner, that you think is unwise and will cause her pain, your strong desire for her happiness can make you want to intervene while your equally strong desire to respect her independence holds you back. Immanuel Kant noted this tension, saying friendship involves both love as a force of attraction and respect as a force that keeps friends apart (1964: 141). Both are stronger toward a friend and both are virtuous, so the conflict is between intrinsic goods.

In one form of virtue, often called de dicto, you want something good because it is good or to act rightly because it is right; here your attitude involves a normative thought. In a different, de re form you want something good for the property that makes it good but without thinking of that as good-making; for example, you want another's happiness just as happiness. Or you want to avoid lying because you dislike lying apart from thinking it is wrong. Some philosophers hold that, whatever may

be true in other contexts, what is best and most fitting in personal relationships is the second, de re, form of virtue. If you visit a friend in hospital, your main motive should not be to do your duty, even your duty as a friend, nor to bring about a better state of affairs. It should be a simpler desire just to comfort your friend (Stocker 1976; Williams 1981). This last claim should not be exaggerated. Friends do have duties to each other and can properly be motivated in part by them. But it does seem right that friendship is best when it involves, as a main if not the only element, the less reflective and more immediate de re form of virtue.

Some philosophers think concern for another's good for its own sake is present only when a friendship has a certain basis. Aristotle distinguished friendships of utility, based on another's usefulness to you; friendships of pleasure, based on enjoying his company; and friendships of virtue, based on his character. Only in a friendship of virtue, he said, do you really care for the other for himself; in the other types you value him only as a means to benefits or pleasure for yourself (1980: 1156a6-b31). But this last claim does not follow. Having become friends with someone because he is pleasant company, you can come to want his happiness as an end in itself; this happens often. The qualities that ground a friendship, those that attract you to a person and that you like him for, do not necessarily determine the content of its concerns; interactions that are good for you can make you want for its own sake, or altruistically, what is good for your friend (Schoeman 1985: 275–6). It is true that if he stops being pleasant company, you may end your friendship, but you'd equally end a friendship of virtue if the other's character became vicious. Nor was Aristotle persuasive when he said a person's moral character is essential to his nature as other properties such as his being good company are not; each is a trait he could either have or lack. What gives friendship value is the virtuous content of its concerns, which is to a large extent independent of the properties on which it rests.

In any case, and contrary to Aristotle, most friendships are based on multiple properties. You typically care for a friend in part because you can count on her when you are in need; that is utility. You also, and crucially, enjoy her company, and you can be attracted by more idiosyncratic features such as her appearance (important not only in romantic love) or distinctive sense of humor. Many of these last properties you just like without thinking they are good or ones anyone else need find appealing; you do not think they are inherently lovable but like them nonetheless. Other properties of hers you admire; here you do think they are lovable or good in a way others should acknowledge. But not all of these are moral properties; you can admire and be attracted by a friend's intelligence, insight into art, and other non-moral traits. (To be fair, these may be included in Aristotle's "virtue," which was not just moral.) Finally, there is her moral character, but it is absurdly high-minded to say, as some philosophers have, that this must be the primary basis of your friendship. It may be wrong to be friends with someone who is vicious; she may need a minimally good character for a relationship with her to be worth having. But appreciating her moral character would justify a relationship with her rather than anyone else only if you thought she is more virtuous than anyone else – which is absurd. Much of what attracts you to a friend are idiosyncratic properties you just like or the accidental fact that you started having enjoyable interactions with her rather than with someone else. But on this morally trivial basis an altruistic and virtuous concern for her good can develop, and when it does, its value is independent of its specific origin.

To a large extent the generic goods in friendship reinforce each other. That you enjoy a friend's company makes it easier for you to learn about his character, cooperate with him, and respond virtuously to his needs; understanding him helps both your shared activities and efforts to help him succeed. There can, however, also be conflicts between these goods. Your enjoying a friend's company can make it harder for you to encourage projects of his that require separation from you; this is part of Kant's conflict between attraction and repulsion. Your concern for his welfare will make you happier about good things in his life but more distressed by bad ones, and it can also work against your knowing him. Your desire that he be successful and good, which is a virtuous desire, can lead you to form, through wishful thinking, an exaggeratedly positive view of his character and achievements,

which you think are better than they really are (Stroud 2006). This can be a benefit to him, since we often make the most of our talents if we have a somewhat inflated picture of what they are, which a friend's similar picture can reinforce. But here virtuous desires about your friend can inhibit accurate understanding of him.

There is a further issue about these goods. Many philosophers hold that, for the full value in friendship, it is not enough to care about the other's happiness for its own sake, as in a generic form of virtue. You must care for *her* for her own sake, or want her happiness and company because they are *hers*, or as states of *this* person. If your friendship rested just on generic properties such as her appearance, intelligence, and even moral character, then if someone appeared with the same properties to a higher degree, or with different but more appealing ones, you would immediately switch your attachment to them. But that, many say, is inconsistent with true friendship, which involves attachment to a friend as an individual and not just for generic traits; it resists such "trading up." (Plato's account of love and Moore's of friendship in particular are faulted for omitting this feature.) The demand for loyalty to a friend may be weaker than to a family member or long-time romantic partner; it is more acceptable to let a friendship end when one of you changes or a more likable person appears. But we still expect some attachment to a friend as against someone new with more pleasing generic traits, and many think this a crucial element in the value of friendship. Explaining what grounds this attachment and how it contributes to friendship's value will lead to our second possibility: that friendship intensifies the values of generic goods, so a state with some value toward a stranger can have more toward a friend.

Friendship as Intensifying Generic Goods

Caring for someone as an individual cannot mean caring for him apart from any of his properties, say as a featureless substrate that has those properties. What is there to be attached to in that? More plausibly, it involves caring for him in part for properties no one else could share. These are historical properties, based on his participation with you in a shared past. You want his happiness and company more than other people's in part because of what the two of you have done together: because he is the person you played tennis with or struggled through adolescence or took that wonderful trip with. And once he has those properties, no one else can be the very person who did those things with you, or have those historical traits (Hurka 1997; Brink 1999; Kolodny 2003). To ground this additional concern, a shared history must be of a certain type. If someone has abused you, you will not on that basis care especially for him; you may well do the opposite. Your history must instead involve good experiences, of enjoyment or of benefiting either each other or outsiders (as in jointly teaching school), or even of jointly suffering hardship. Your history can also attach you to material things, such as a landscape or a house, and it is crucial in familial and romantic love. But it also figures in friendship, where a shared past of the right kind can make you care more for a friend than for a stranger with equally or more appealing generic traits.

You have little such history when you are just starting a friendship with someone, but as your relationship progresses, it comes to have more of a shared past and an ever stronger basis for this type of concern, so you value your friend more as an individual and are less likely to trade up. Your history can also affect your friendship's other basis, the generic properties you like your friend for. Having first been attracted by some of her traits, you can now like others because they are hers. The singer recalling "The way you wear your hat/The way you sip your tea" didn't first have preferred ways of handling hats and tea cups and then chose her lover because he used them. She first loved him and then cherished certain mannerisms as ones of the person she had a romance with. So in friendship you can first be drawn by some of a person's properties and then grow fond of others, such as her distinctive laugh or style of dress, because they belong to the person you did things with. You may even come to like in her traits you would not like in anyone else. It is not that your shared history must tie you to a friend forever. If her other properties change or no longer attract you, the loss of that

other basis of friendship can outweigh your shared past. That past, too, can deteriorate, if interactions that were once enjoyable become tedious or strained. But if her properties remain attractive and your interactions stay positive, your shared history will make you care more for her than for others with comparable generic traits.

A different view rests attachment to an individual on more global properties he has, such as a distinctive style of expressing his generic traits (Badhwar 1987; Nozick 1989) or the way they combine to form the organic whole of his personality (Clausen 2019). Even about love, however, these views are far too high-minded. To be someone's friend, must I really have identified a distinctive style he has? Can't I be indifferent to many of his traits, not just individually but also as contributing to his overall personality, and even mildly put off by some? More importantly, both these views depend tacitly on the historical one. It is not as if, before meeting your friend, you had a favorite style of expressing traits or way of combining them that he fortuitously turned out to have; you came to like those global properties because they were his. Nor can these views explain all instances of attachment. Imagine that a friend has died and scientists offer to create a perfect molecular duplicate of him. Since the duplicate will have all the same global properties, these views imply that having it means you suffer no loss. But surely you will not think that; you will not accept the replacement since not even a perfect duplicate can be the very person you did things with.

Not only do we in fact care more about our friends, on most views we *should* care more. It is commonly held that we have stronger duties to a friend, just as to a family member or romantic partner, so whatever we owe people in general, we owe more to an intimate (Jeske 1997). If a friend is moving house or needs comforting, there is more call to help her than to help a stranger in similar need. Your relationship with her intensifies your duty, making it stronger because she is a friend. The same is true of negative duties such as not to cause harm or lie. Though always wrong, these acts seem worse when done to a friend; then she can ask not only "How could you do that?" but "How could you do that *to me*?" These various intensifications may rest in part on other generic duties, for example on your having tacitly committed to help your friend or your owing her gratitude. But these generic factors seem inadequate to both the degree and the breadth of the intensifications, and also to the sense that extra concern is owed to your friend as a friend. If what ties you specifically to her is your shared history, what grounds the intensifications must be in large part that history. Your having done good things with her must contribute significantly to your having stronger duties to benefit and avoid harming her now.

But a shared history can also intensify certain goods in friendship, most centrally that of virtue. If you have a stronger duty to promote a friend's happiness, a natural explanation is that his happiness is a greater good relative to you, or from your point of view, than a stranger's equal happiness; that is why it makes a stronger demand. And it is in general better and more virtuous to care about greater goods and evils, for example to feel compassion for others' intense pains than just for their mild pains. So if a friend's happiness is a greater good relative to you, your wanting and being pleased by it is better and more virtuous than your having the same attitudes to a stranger's happiness; its value is intensified. We saw, however, that you typically do not have the same attitudes to a stranger's happiness; you care more about a friend's. Your concern for him is therefore in two ways intrinsically better. It is more intense, where more concern for a good is in general better; and it is concern for what relative to you is a greater good, which also is better. Similar points hold of your desires not to harm or lie to a friend. They too are doubly better, since it is more virtuous to want to avoid more serious wrongs and your aversions to wronging a friend are stronger.

In addition, your pattern of concern, where you care more about the greater good of your friend's happiness and the greater wrong of harming him, is also good as a pattern, because it approximates an ideal of proportioning your attitudes to their objects' degrees of value or importance. If your history with a friend makes her happiness a greater good relative to you, your caring about it as much more as its greater value makes appropriate is itself virtuous and good. And this good in particular rests on your attachment to her as an individual. If you cared no more about her happiness than about that of

a stranger with similar generic properties, your combination of concerns would be at least less good as a combination and could be evil. (This is less a case of intensifying a value than of changing its content, in this case the division of concern that is best.) Caring no more about someone with whom you have a rich and rewarding history omits a central good of friendship and may even be positively bad if it departs too far from proportionality.

It can also be less good and possibly bad to care too much, or more than proportionally, about a friend's good. That can lead you to act wrongly, by giving more preference to her happiness than its greater value relative to you makes appropriate or even by harming a stranger in order to benefit your friend. Excessive partiality toward a friend, which in fact is common, is morally dangerous (Cocking and Kennett 2000) but also means your friendship has less of the good of virtue than it could and may have an element of vice.

If your history with a friend intensifies both your duties concerning him and the values of the virtues related to them, why does it do so? Why does it make desiring his happiness better than desiring a stranger's? It may be that there is no further explanation. Your past interactions make some people closer to you and others less close: your family and romantic partner arguably closest, your friends somewhat less close, and others less close still. And it may be just a brute or underivative truth that duties and virtues are strengthened by closeness (Jeske 1997). But a possible explanation looks to the requirement that your shared past be a good one. It says the value in that past calls for heightened efforts and concern now, as fitting and therefore mandated responses to that value; more specifically, it says these responses "resonate" with that value (Kolodny 2010) in a way that gives them extra weight. There is some similarity here to the idea that it is good to love what is good, which also involves resonance with a value, but there are also differences. What is mandated here is not greater concern for the good object itself, the history, but for things related to it, such as the present and future success of the person who figured in that history, even in projects largely independent of you. That may not be as immediately compelling. And the self-referential character of the intensifications, their being only in relation to *your* friend, is assumed rather than explained, since it is only a history *you* participated in that has this effect. Still, it is possible to see the degrees of intensification of both duties and virtues as dependent on two factors: how good your shared history was and how much close interaction it involved (Hurka 1997), where familial and established romantic love arguably score highest on these dimensions and most friendships somewhat lower. With or without this explanation, however, if it is better and more virtuous to care about a friend, and what ties you to him is your history, the added value must rest somehow on that history.

Intensifications are also possible for other goods, such as knowledge. Then understanding a friend's character has more value, given your shared history, than a similar understanding, should you have it, of a stranger's. Just as some hold that, its instrumental value aside, there is special intrinsic worth in self-knowledge, or understanding yourself, so a related view finds special value in understanding someone close to you just because he is close: what ties him to you makes knowing him better. A parallel view is possible about achievement, so helping to realize goals in a friend's life or engaging in cooperative ventures with him is better than doing the same with a stranger; again your shared past increases a generic good. These last two intensifications do not have the independent support of the one about virtue, which follows from the same facts that give you stronger duties to a friend, for example the greater value relative to you of his happiness. They are also harder to assess given the other ways knowledge of and achievement with a friend can be better, as when your shared past gives you more evidence about his character and your affection for him makes you keener to learn from it. Still, these instrumental considerations aside, knowing about and achieving with a friend can be better because they concern him, so your history also intensifies these non-moral goods.

The parallel view seems less plausible, however, for pleasure. Interactions with a friend are in many ways more enjoyable, but is the resulting pleasure also better *as pleasure* because it is with a friend?

That is harder to believe. Like virtue, knowledge and achievement involve intentional attitudes: you have a belief *about* some fact and aim *at* some goal. So when your belief or goal concerns a friend, who then figures in your attitude's object, that can increase the attitude's worth. But if pleasure is just a feeling, with no intentionality in what makes it pleasure, there cannot be that reason for intensification. As always the same feeling, it seems always of the same value. (When a pleasure is intentional, as when you are pleased that a friend is happy, it can be an instance of, and especially good as, virtue.) So while intensification is compelling for the good of virtue, and perhaps plausible for knowledge and achievement, it is less so for pleasure or enjoyment. Your shared history with a friend makes for distinctively valuable forms of some goods, though arguably not of all.

Friendship and Distinctive Goods

Finally, friendship and personal relationships more generally may involve distinctive goods, ones not found to any or a significant degree outside them. This is suggested when friendship is simply added to a list of basic goods, as if it is independent of all other goods. But if friendship is a compound of more basic elements, such as enjoying another's company and wanting her happiness, must not its value depend somehow on the values of its parts? An alternative view finds distinctive values in the way these elements are combined in friendship, or in the complex whole they make up. This view exploits the "principle of organic unities" (Moore 1903: 27–36), according to which the value of a whole need not equal the sum of the values its parts would have on their own but can be greater or smaller, depending on how those parts relate.

One possible application of this principle is to the elements in the relation each friend, considered on his own, has to the other. However good these elements are individually, even as intensified, they may have more value when they are combined, so you enjoy a friend's company *and* understand his character *and* want his happiness. That you relate to him in all these ways at once can be a further, organic good. Similar combinations are possible, at lower levels of intensity, to a non-friend, so this good may not be unique to intimate relationships. It would be unique if it appeared only when there are elements above a threshold of intensity or ones based on a substantial shared history, but even without those restrictions it is significantly present only in closer relationships. So one possible distinctive value in friendship is the way it simultaneously involves several intense relations to the same person.

A related possibility values the combination of these elements across time, so your enjoying, knowing, or feeling benevolently toward the same person at many times is an organic good. Persistence through time, which is often thought essential to "deep" personal relations, has obvious instrumental value, since it can increase enjoyment and knowledge and lead to stronger altruistic desires. But it may also have intrinsic value, so a long-lasting friendship with one person is better than a sequence of shorter friendships, each containing as much enjoyment and other goods at a time as the longer-lasting one. Whether or not this idea is persuasive, it posits an organic good not found in more transitory acquaintanceships.

The most compelling application of the organic principle, however, is to the combination of the relations friends have to each other. It is to the fact that these relations are reciprocated, so just as *A* enjoys *B*'s company, *B* enjoys *A*'s, and just as *A* understands *B* and wants his happiness, so *B* understands *A* and wants his. Reciprocation seems part of the concept of friendship as it is not of romantic or familial love. Romantic love can be unrequited, and a child can love a parent who, tragically, does not love it. But it does not seem possible for *A* to be a friend of *B* unless *B* is a friend of *A*. This conceptual point aside, friends typically feel mutual affection, and the fact that their attitudes are reciprocated is arguably a source of additional value in their friendship. The addition could in principle be a matter of intensification, so *A*'s desire for *B*'s happiness is made better by *B*'s desiring *A*'s, and vice versa. But if the value rests on the reciprocation, it seems most fitting to attach it to the relation between them as such, as a property of the friendship as a whole rather than of either individual. Reciprocation is again possible between non-friends, but there too it is a property of their

interaction rather than of either individual, and it is present in more elements and at higher levels of intensity between friends, so it is at least to a large extent distinctive of friendship. And it is especially distinctive if what is reciprocated is the friends' attachment to each other as individuals, as when each wants the other's happiness more than a stranger's because of their shared history. Finally, this third organic good can be augmented by the other two, so there is more value when there is reciprocation of many elements, say of enjoyment *and* knowledge *and* benevolence, and when the reciprocation lasts for a longer time. Then friendship is a good with many cross-cutting relational, in the sense of organic, elements. As well as having independently valuable parts, it is multiply valuable as a whole.

A related possible good is mutual causal influence, when friends affect each other's desires, attitudes, and even characters. They can, for example, each acquire interests from the other and so develop shared interests. To have value, the influences here must be mutual. If *A* takes up many of *B*'s interests but *B* takes up none of *A*'s, that does not seem organically good; *B* must likewise be inspired by *A*. In some cases the causal upshot of this influence is intended, as when *A* encourages *B* to try an activity of *A*'s because it can then be shared or *B* adopts it for that reason. This need not be so, however. *B* can just see *A* engaging in an activity, find it independently interesting, and try it; if *A* does the same with an activity of *B*'s, there is reciprocal causation without intention. And there can be other unintended and even subconscious influences, as their time together causes them to think, feel, and even talk in similar ways. This may be especially valuable if the mutual influence is with respect to goods, as when they increase each other's knowledge or improve each other's characters. But even neutral effects, such as on each other's interests or vocabulary, may have some worth. If among the goods of friendship are ones of reciprocation, they can include friends' causal effects on each other.

Some writers emphasize friends' influence on each other's values or ideals of life, so they together develop a shared set of evaluative beliefs. But this again exaggerates the role of moral considerations in friendship and also exaggerates how far friends must share values. Can't a consequentialist be friends with a deontologist or a liberal with a conservative? What they do need is a shared way of dealing with any differences in values they have, one involving respect for each other's beliefs. That is an instance of a final, especially valuable form of reciprocation.

It involves each friend's constraining her activities by her concern for the other, so each pursues her ends in ways that do not set back, and may further, the other's ends and good, and each tries to ensure that the benefits and burdens of the relationship are fairly shared. (This last aspect of friendship may, more than others, involve de dicto thoughts, here about fairness.) It also involves the friends' jointly resolving any conflicts that do arise in a way that acknowledges each one's prerogative to act on her own convictions. This instantiates mutual virtuous concern but goes beyond merely wanting each other's good to involve a pattern of active mutual accommodation that many think a central good in friendship. It can be seen as combining the value of reciprocated virtue with the achievement of creating, together, a relationship in which that virtue is continuously expressed.

Assigning the goods of reciprocation to friendship as a whole fits the way friends typically care not only about each other's good but also about their relationship as such. Each can want not only the other but also the friendship between them to flourish; thus each can want the reciprocation between them to continue. This organic-unity approach to these goods, which treats friendship as a relation between distinct individuals, contrasts with ones that see a friend as an "extended self" (Sherman 1987; Brink 1999), so his good is "part" of yours, or that borrow a view of romantic love on which partners form a unified "we" in some metaphysical sense (Nozick 1989). The claims these views make can only be taken so far. Even your closest intimates remain separate centers of consciousness: no matter how much you are pained by a friend's pain and want it to end, you cannot experience it directly, as he does. Nor does your wanting his good make it in any useful sense a "part" of yours. Whatever your good consists in, whether pleasure, knowledge, or the fulfillment of some desires, it must be a state of you or more closely related to you than a friend's freedom from pain or success in independent projects can be (Parfit 1984: 494–5). These views' metaphysical claims also undermine a central good of friendship, that of altruistic concern. If a friend is an extension of you or part of a single unit with you, caring about

his happiness is like caring about your own, and it is hard to see much that is virtuous or admirable in that. Only if he is separate from you can your desires about him have the special worth of other-regarding virtue. Nor can these views easily accommodate the side of friendship that involves Kant's force of repulsion, such as your strong aversions to interfering with a friend's choices or independent pursuits; those too require him to be separate. Friendship may involve goods not located in the friends' individual lives, in particular the various relations of reciprocation. But these relations are best seen as holding between distinct individuals, so their mutual attitudes are on each side altruistic.

Conclusion

Friendship can be good in several ways. It can involve generic goods such as enjoyment, knowledge, and virtue that are possible outside friendship but found especially often and to an especially high degree within it. It can involve intensified versions of these goods, so, for example, a degree of virtuous concern that is good toward a stranger is even better toward a friend. And it can involve more distinctive goods, such as the various forms of reciprocation. On some views the value of friendship rests on just one or two of these grounds; on others it rests on all three. But surely on any view it can contribute significantly to a desirable human life.

Related Chapters

Aristotle on the Nature and Value of Friendship; Friendship and Self-Interest; Friendship and the Personal Good.

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