

David Schmidt is a graduate student here at KU, and has served with distinction as an instructor and as past president of GASP. David attended Bethel College and Harvard Divinity School prior to enrolling at KU, and also served time in the Congo as an alternative to military service. His essay, "Friendship," also won an award from the Lewis Essay contest, sponsored by the school of religion.

David's paper has also been delivered to a meeting of GASP; and Mike presented his paper at GASP's symposium on Freedom.

It will be the policy of the contest in the future that the winning essay or essays will be presented to an open meeting of GASP.

It is hoped that the response to the contest this year will be as enthusiastic as last; it is further hoped that it will be possible to increase the stipend associated with the contest at some (near) future date.

Sincerely,

Joe D. VanZandt

FRIENDSHIP

David Schmidt

In this paper I attempt to characterize friendship by beginning with certain aspects which are necessary but not sufficient conditions for friendship and ending with the sufficient conditions which specify the requirements for true friendship. With each succeeding condition there is an extensional diminution until those few who are real friends are characterized. There is also a progression from the most superficial types of friendship to the most meaningful.

A pre-condition for friendship is a general "love" for mankind. A person with whom it is possible to be a friend must at least not have such an aversion to mixing with people and dealing with them in ordinary life that he completely isolates himself from them and becomes a hermit. There must be at least some elementary kind of trust which allows a person to become at least somewhat involved in dealings with other people.

Friendship involves two persons who actively strive together for a good. What is required here is that the persons whom one calls friends are at least acquaintances who cooperate with some purpose in mind although the purpose may be differing in some sense.¹ This requirement is intensionally very small and extensionally very great, since practically any association of two people qualifies and therefore practically everyone in the world would be a friend in some sense or other to someone. Two strangers who meet at an amusement park and who are arbitrarily put together to row to an island are friends to the extent that they are working together for the common goal of arriving at the island. Similarly members of the same bridge club or of the same church are friends if they are acquainted with one another. The goal of each person may be different, as, for example, in a business relationship in which one person buys something from another, but insofar as these two people cooperate together, their relationship is a friendship. In the buyer-seller relationship, each seeks a different good (one, money; the other, the commodity or service), but both profit (presumably) and both cooperate, which makes it a friendship. The relationship may be beneficial to the people involved but harmful to others, such as among a band of train robbers, and yet since the members of the band cooperate together, they are, to that extent, friends. A further example would be a sexual relationship in which each partner wanted only to satisfy his own desires.

Formally speaking, as soon as the activity is over, the people cease to be friends, which means that many superficial, fleeting

relationships will be classified as friendships during the brief time the two people are associated with another, but when the business deal is closed, or the two rowers have reached the island or the church members have quit the church, then the friendship is terminated. If the activity is more long-term, then the friendship is a more enduring one.

Since this type of friendship is a kind of friendship of usefulness in which the goal of each individual, whether shared with others or not, is what is important in each, a good man can be a friend to an evil man, since there may be some interests in which they could cooperate. Some activities could be done together while the individuals have different interests. A good man might read aloud a contract to an evil blind man because he enjoys the company of the blind man, and the blind man has an interest in the material read.¹²

There is a problem which arises with the use of this criterion for friendship and it is that two persons could be striving for a good with one liking the other but the latter hating the former. Since calling these two people friends would seem very odd, a further requirement is necessary.

Friendship must be a reciprocal well-wishing. As mentioned in the pre-condition for friendship, there must be some desire to mix with other men, and if this desire becomes an active wishing well towards the other beyond just wishing well in a purely commercial sense (a commercial sense would be a creditor wishing well to his debtor only to get his money back), then the relation begins to become more like a friendship in the ordinary sense of the word. If one person actively wishes well to another person who dislikes him, is it good usage to call the former a friend? That would be contradictory since he is at the same time a friend (since he wishes well to the other) and an enemy (because hated by the other).³ Therefore there should be a mutual well wishing before two persons are to be called friends.

A person who hates all mankind can be no one's friend since instead of rejoicing with someone's happiness and fortune this type of person rejoices at their misfortunes. There are different types of hating mankind: one is actively doing evil to others; another is gossiping, which, in always finding the worst motives in everyone, undermines other people's confidence in all mankind and shows a hatred for mankind; another is the sin of pride in which a person esteems himself above all mankind and thereby uses people as means and not as ends (in Kant's phraseology). For there to be friendship, this kind of wishing ill to mankind must give way to a well-wishing for mankind.⁴ Before friendship can be possible, one must recognize his need for other people, and rid himself of pride. If pride is never overcome, meaning that a person continues to believe that other people are inferior to him, this is at worst a desire to use people and at best a kind of attitude of self-sufficiency. In either case this person can never be a friend to others since he has not recognized the right of people to make demands upon him, that is, has not recognized the need to wish

other people well (he only wishes himself well).⁵ Losing one's pride is a humbling experience because everyone would like to believe that he is self-sufficient, but it is necessary to lose one's pride in order to develop a relationship based on well-wishing.

Friendship must be based on something beautiful in the other person. To wish well to another person not merely in a commercial sense means that one must somehow find something attractive in the other person. To pass from a general love of mankind to an active wishing well to another presupposes some kind of attraction. There is something of beauty in the other person which exerts a pull. In the types of friendship that I would call rather superficial, the attraction could be physical or in a chic manner of doing something whereas the more solid a friendship is the more virtuous it becomes. Examples of the more solid types would be friendships based on frankness, ability to keep confidences, and thoughtfulness of one person towards another.⁶

I believe the higher types of friendship to be based upon the moral and intellectual beauty of a person. What is most beautiful in another person is the ability to communicate in such a way that it opens up one's sensitivities in a new way by expressing what one has been trying to clarify to oneself.

Friendship is a "procreation in the beautiful (Symposium)." Whatever the beauty in the other person is, friendship should be a production of something of value by the two persons who are mutually attracted. Plato understands the sexual relation as being really done to bring about progeny.⁷ Another type of "procreation in the beautiful" is the student-teacher relationship in which the student is attracted by the wisdom of the teacher and the teacher can help occasion the birth of knowledge in the mind of the student.⁸

A further example would be two persons of roughly equal wisdom and sensitivities who communicate with each other very well and who sensitize each other's moral consciousness. By that I mean those who work unselfishly for each other's personal development have that sort of relationship. Here the relationship is not between superior and inferior but between two persons of roughly equal capacity who bring out the best in each other and create something better than either one could have done alone. He is a social being and therefore in this type of association, he can realize his highest potential as a sensitive moral being whereas if he remained a hermit all his life there would be very little "human" growth, even though there might be some kind of intellectual growth if he had access to books. Only within a society of people who are honest with each other does a kind of moral growth take place in which a person can realize the subjective, or selfish nature of any of the principles of his actions. As Kant has written, one must descend into the hell of one's subjectivity to become virtuous,⁹ and to me it would seem that in some cases the only way to do this is in the fellowship of a friend with whom one

can be honest. By expressing one's own thoughts to another, they become clearer to oneself, but also in having longterm personal contact with someone else a person recognizes how self-centered most of his actions are, by seeing his selfishness reflected in the responses of the other.

This sort of friendship would include a sharing of judgments (and one would have to be willing to accept the other's judgments in return) about the morality of each other's actions. The judgments would have to be forwarded in a humble spirit since one rarely knows what really prompts one's own actions, and so it would even be more unlikely that one would know the motives of another person. Moreover the judgments should be proposed in a supportive climate so that the other person need not react to one as a subject but rather to the principle on which his action was based (especially if the judgment is unfavorable). If there is any shame to be felt it should not be the shame caused by their subjective relationship but rather shame in comparing the principle he actually followed with one that he should have followed.

I do not believe that one can make another person into a moral being by praise or blame because the moral person is autonomous which means that the moral agent must choose his own actions. If praise or blame could make a person do an action in a kind of simple behaviorist way, he would not be the cause of his action, the indoctrination would be the cause. However, even though one cannot make another person moral, one can be occasion for the other person to learn more about his own motives (by conversation or example) and thereby can help the other to become more moral.

Rationality and Friendship. There are two senses in which one becomes more a friend in becoming more rational. One is the above sense in which one's motives become more clear to oneself and thereby can be corrected or reinforced (an unarticulated motive if bad would not be correctable), but there is also another reason why friendship must have a rational base. If all there was to friendship was an egoistic desire for sex, the bond uniting the two people would be only the irrational connection of a physical drive (or passion), and in this case one would not be said to choose his friends, since there would be no rational element involved at all. Or if one stipulated not sexual desire but instinctual ties based on a blood relation and the affection which comes from being members of a same family as being the bases of true friendship, here again one would not choose his friends because being born into one family or another is purely accidental (from a moral standpoint). Even though friendships could develop from these relationships (since one could choose to wish well to one's mistress or family members) the fact that there is no choice made by the individual concerned would preclude them from being friendships.

To move away from an irrationalist account of friendship, some other basis of friendship must be possible, and Plato and Kant assume in their accounts that man can act by reason but give different accounts of how this is possible.¹⁰ Assuming that an account can be

given, there are then several types of people: those for whom the appetitive part is never mastered (and one may question whether these people are really human beings at all), those for whom the appetitive part is mastered except for occasional lapses, and those for whom the appetitive part is entirely controlled. According to Plato, only those persons who have completely mastered the appetitive part are capable of becoming most truly friends of the other.¹¹ Those who occasionally slip and let their passions carry them into a physical relationship, but who do not have their hearts in it and repent later also have a very honorable relationship, but not as high as the true lover, the philosopher.

If Plato means that one must be able to control all his desires and to decide which acts he will do, that is one thing; but if he means that it is not possible in principle to be a morally good man and to have any sexual relationship, that is quite another. It would seem possible to have sexual relations with one's wife while remaining moral and still having a friendship of the highest level (although, of course I would agree that a high type of friendship could not be based on sex and physical desire). It would seem to me that one could be friends (in the sense of having the best interests of the other at heart) and lovers (in the sexual sense) at the same time.¹²

In the best of all possible worlds, one would be able not only to choose his friends (which presupposes a reasoned choice), but one would be able to choose all his actions (and thus be able to give a rational account of them to his friend when sharing with him).

The highest type of friendship is one in which two persons equally share their deepest moral feelings and thoughts with each other. The relationship mentioned previously in which two persons share their true opinions with each other is a necessary part of true friendship, and it is very difficult though not impossible to achieve. In this kind of relationship one runs the highest risks because a person in opening himself up by sharing may be rejected, abused, or ridiculed, but this type of relationship if successful is the most liberating and profitable type. Dialogue brings to light motives and feelings that one could not have found otherwise, and since knowing oneself (one's motives) is a necessary part of acting ethically, more can be gained from this kind of friendship than from any other.¹³

Duty becomes often more constraining in this relationship due to the difficulty in being honest. The friendship grows in proportion to the honesty of both parties, and can die if it becomes evident that the other person is not being honest. Other friendships are easier to establish: friendships based on pleasure, usefulness, or even at times friendships based on other persons' interests (some people find it easy to subordinate their interests and will humor other people, but these same people would find it very difficult to get involved in a sharing relationship due to

the risks involved). Once one has had this type of honest, sharing relationship the other types of friendship begin to appear to be not very worthy friendships at all, and the ordinary type of socializing that one does appears even to be an evasion of one's responsibility to have this kind of depth friendship with others.

Since in this sort of relationship one has the obligation to share one's judgments of the other with the other, and since one seeks out the most virtuous and trustworthy people one knows, the fear of rejection (or loss of respect) is maximized but the fear of being misused (or misrepresented to others) is minimized. One always fears that when one's true motives become known to others (especially very virtuous people) there will be a loss of respect and perhaps rejection, but on the other hand, if the person is virtuous one has less fear of his divulging of confidences. The other person being virtuous and having plumbed the abyss of his subjective motives also, one can fear that he will continually find that what one thought was a worthy motive in doing something was really a selfish inclination. He opens himself up to the same risks and so there is a kind of equality.

Friendship is not only this type of friendship which is perhaps the same as Kant's moral friendship, but to be the highest type of friendship it must have this element in it. A friend of this type should also care about the well-being of the other and materially or spiritually help him in need. The friendship cannot be based merely on the prudential consideration that one will befriend another since one may have need of him someday (a friendship of utility), although in becoming a friend to someone one does recognize that he himself is not self-sufficient. If one did approach friendship from prudential considerations, one would have the intention of obligating another whenever one did anything for another person. One should rather do things disinterestedly for other people.

Kant seems to believe that the initiator of a friendship eternally obligates the other because he has the priority of merit (deserving well) from the other.¹⁴ The duty of gratitude commands respect from the receiver of any benefit, and since respecting another automatically lowers one's own self-esteem with respect to the other, the other is viewed as one's superior. It would thereby seem impossible to meet the requirements he gives for friendship ("Friendship (in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect.")¹⁵ Perhaps Kant is only critical in this passage of what he calls pragmatic love, in which doing something for another's well-being from love obligates him to do something commensurate in return (and upon doing this, the other person is obligated to do something in return, etc.), but as it is stated it would seem to apply to his concept of moral friendship also. If so, it would seem that the one who initiated a moral friendship would be the superior in the relationship and could never be equal (in merit).

In the relationship that I have sketched above in the paper, I believe that the two persons should be equals in their willingness to share and that neither should be eternally obligated to another (a problem in Kant's view since there would be no way to discharge one's obligation). One would always consider oneself to be in some way inferior and the friendship would be more constraining than liberating. I agree with the ideal of moral friendship as Kant has outlined it, although his conception of it seems to be a relationship without love (that is, taking it upon oneself to be interested in the ends and goals of other men). It seems to me that a relationship in which one could be interested in the ends and goals of the other would coexist with the moral friendship. That is, in Kant's terms I believe that moral friendship and pragmatic friendship would be part of the same relationship and that (practical) love can be a part of moral friendship.¹⁶

In my view, friendship is not so much an end in itself as a means to becoming more morally sensitive and thus gaining more self-knowledge.¹⁷ One needs people but does not use them (as a businessman would or a man governed by hubris) whereas friendships of utility do often use people. In this relationship the persons are ends in themselves since each is interested in the moral growth of the other, and to grow morally (in the sense of gaining self-knowledge) requires other people.¹⁸

Friendship, though having no direct moral relationship to another person can in fact serve a quasi-moral role. Visiting a person very sick and discouraged in a hospital, who is thinking of suicide, can perhaps remind him of happier times shared together, buttress his courage by reinforcing his feelings of self-esteem, and with this kind of spirit his reason can assume its proper role again. Friendship plays a vital role in providing the occasion for a person to become more virtuous or to remain virtuous.

What is loved about another person is the fact that one will receive a fair and sympathetic hearing (as well as the fact that one can learn from and be inspired by the latter) which means that whenever communication is possible friendship is possible.¹⁹ It is difficult to find people with whom one can reveal one's inner thoughts since it is difficult to find trustworthy people, but it is not impossible. One can surmount the inclinations which would lead a person to adopt friendships based only on pleasure and utility, and one can adopt a truly moral friendship with another if one has the courage.

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NOTES

¹If this requirement were not placed on friendship, two persons who are strangers to one another but who are working toward a common goal would be considered friends. Say, for example, the goal were world peace and the persons working toward it were the diplomats of two countries, and the diplomats did not know each other, if one did not require that friends be at least acquaintances, one would consider them to be friends. They may be potential friends but it is not proper to call them friends.

²Aristotle believes that friendships either between evil men or an evil man and a good man are the most unstable kind since evil men are at variance with themselves, which makes their desires and wishes the most unstable among men.

³This seems to be the logic of Plato's objection to this move in the Lysis, and the same objection applies if one wants to call the beloved, rather than the lover, a friend. The relationship between Hippothales and Lysis is of this unrequited nature.

⁴Kant has criticized the tendency to gossip and believes that one should do the opposite--believe the better motives about others until proven wrong instead of believing the worst. Believing the best promotes a general love of mankind which is helpful for morality.

⁵Aristotle raises a host of practical problems about wishing well to others. A friend cannot be absent too long or the wishing well will become inactive. The wishing well cannot be just a passing fancy (as when one is impressed by the performance of an athlete, one wishes him well, but because this is only an empty wish without any other activity on one's part, it remains just a passing fancy). He believes however that these passing fancies could be the start of a friendship.

⁶Aristotle believed that in the highest types of friendships, what is loved in the other person is his character (that is, of a good person), and since character is something which is as permanent as anything that can be found in people, this type of friendship is the most permanent and genuine. He considered friendships of utility and pleasure to be less permanent since needs and pleasures change.

⁷Plato links the desire for sex to a desire for progeny which is really a yearning for immortality. In this way animals also yearn for immortality. It would seem to me that if this were true, it would be hard to separate this from pride and if pride were there love would not be present.

⁸In the Symposium Plato believes that in the life of the highest type of lover there is a progression beginning with the appreciation of (a) one beautiful body which then progresses to an appreciation of all beautiful bodies, (b) appreciation of the higher beauty of the soul (which can be in the husk of an ugly body), (c) laws and institutions, (d) the sciences which liberate him even further from individual objects, laws, and institutions, and (e) finally the apprehension of the single form of beauty which embodies no visible form whatever but is seen by the eye of reason alone.

⁹Immanuel Kant, The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1964), p. 104.

¹⁰In the Phaedrus Plato gives an account in the form of a metaphor. The soul is divided up into three parts: a charioteer and two steeds. The one is unruly and ugly (the passionate or appetitive element in man) and one well-disciplined and beautiful. The unruly steed upon sighting someone physically beautiful rushes to approach the beauty and to possess it whereas the charioteer, awed by the reflection of the divine embodied in the person stays back in awe and reverence. Since the unruly horse charges headlong toward the beauty (perceiving no divinity in it), the charioteer must brutally beat and restrain it. Eventually the steed stops from fear of being beaten even further, and after repeated attempts by the unruly steed to free itself from the charioteer's control, it is finally controllable and quivers in fear at the approach of the beauty.

Kant believes that insofar as man is moral his actions are self-caused and reason does control them. How it is possible that reason is not always in control is not explained.

¹¹The Symposium can be understood as an attempt to present Socrates as the paradigm of a true friend (lover). Alcibiades slept with him and yet there was no physical love involved, and thus Socrates is presented as one who can resist even the most tempting allurements of the sensual world (since in the Phaedrus it was hardest to control the appetitive part of man (unruly steed) when the beautiful person was also attracted to it, and Alcibiades presents himself as doing everything he could to attract Socrates which means that Socrates has passed the hardest test). R. G. Bury has suggested this interpretation of the Symposium in his The Symposium of Plato (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1909), p. lxxv.

¹²Plato is more interested in a transcendent good which is divine in nature and only seen by reason. If desire and passion were included in the conception of the good that would imply a lack, which would be characteristic of human and not gods. Therefore, the good should not have to depend in any way on passion.

¹³Plato does not emphasize this kind of friendship to the same degree as Kant. Plato considers it a step toward the Good and it occupies only a second place in progress toward the Good as appreciation of the higher beauty of the soul in the Symposium (210 b-c). The progress toward the good is really a progress away from the individuals and toward one science of the good through the dialectic, and since it passes through the stages of appreciation of institutions and all the sciences until one arrives at the one science of the good, there is an intellectualism (the good is the highest concept uniting the others and giving truth to all) which is not present in Kant. Kant believes that the principle of morality is present in all people and with a bit of clarification can be made explicit, and therefore does not need this same degree of intellectualism. People are not needed in the same way in Plato and Kant. Plato is attracted to other people so that together they can give birth to the highest conception of the good. For Kant two people can have a rather clear conception of the good for them (their duty) since all people have a sense of duty, but this sense of duty is a burden on them which sharing helps relieve, enabling them to act morally with a lighter heart. There is an intellectual element (finding the right maxim), but that is generally not the basic problem. The problem generally is to subordinate and eliminate the pathological maxims by the categorical imperative.

¹⁴The other person has a duty of gratitude, and in fact this is a sacred duty which means that "the obligation regarding it can never be wholly discharged by any act commensurate with it (and for this reason the one obligated always remains obligated)." Kant, The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964), p. 119-20.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁶Perhaps Kant believes that the two can go together too, but if so I have difficulty understanding the role of obligation in that friendship.

¹⁷By saying this I agree more with Plato than Aristotle. In a sense Aristotle seems to hold that friendship is an end in itself since friendship would hold the state together even without justice (if I understand rightly), whereas for Plato there is no friendship at all without justice, and friendship through the dialectic is a means of finding true beauty and justice. A problematic aspect of the relation between justice and friendship is found in Aristotle. He implies in his discussion of justice and friendship that the relation of friendship to justice is intensive and extensive, i.e., one has more obligation to favor one's friends. If this means that, everything being equal, one should help one's friends rather than strangers, this is acceptable; but if taken to mean that one has no obligation to enlarge his circle of acquaintances, this becomes problematic. There are duties toward a stranger too. If everyone chose always to help only his friends, strangers would never be helped.

¹⁸For Aristotle other people were necessary because virtue was an activity and others were necessary so that a virtuous man could continue exercising his virtue.

¹⁹This can provide a criterion for practically deciding whether friendship is still possible. An example would be provided by the case in which a person was paralyzed to such an extent that he could do nothing but blink his eyes in agreement or disagreement when listening to another, and in this case the role of confidant could still be fulfilled by him and friendship would still be possible. If a person were in such a state that he could make no indication whatsoever of having received any communication from another person (in a coma) and if it were known that the person would never come out of that state, then perhaps the friendship would be terminated. I doubt that this could ever be known, however.