

MORALITY OF FRIENDSHIP: A STUDY

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the
degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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NEW DELHI-110067
INDIA
2007**

For Mummy, and to the memories of Papa
(the first friends in my life)



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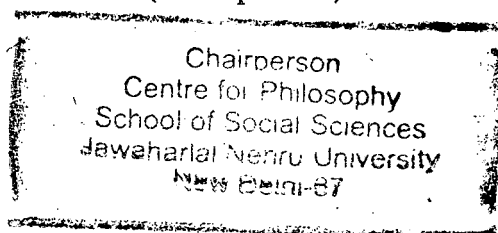
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Morality of Friendship: A Study" by Shilpi Srivastava, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, is her original work. It has not been submitted in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university, to the best of our knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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DECLARATION

I, **Shilpi Srivastava**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**Morality of Friendship: A Study**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University** is my original work and has not been submitted by me or by anyone else for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, my thanks are due to my guide **Prof. Satya P. Gautam**, without whose constant guidance and suggestions this work would not have been possible. His constant reminder that, 'there is always a scope and need for improvement' not only pushed me to follow this advice at every stage of this work but will also stay with me all my life as a guiding principle. I wish to admit here that at times his demands and expectations seemed to be too high for me to fulfill. But it is for these that the work has taken its present shape. I am well aware that the present work can be improved further if I could spend more time to reflect on the issues discussed.

I also wish to thank all my teachers at the centre, **Prof. R. P. Singh, Dr. Bhagat Oinam, and Dr. Manidipa Sen**, for enhancing my understanding of philosophy during the course-work and for being always an encouraging source of motivation.

As I stand here at a crucial juncture in the long journey from ignorance to knowledge, I want to thank God, apart from all other things, for blessing me with such a wonderful family. It was my Papa who had helped me reflect on my destinations of life, and my mother who has stayed beside me in every step that I take on this way. Without this confidence that they have shown in me, it would not have been possible to pursue my goals. I would like to thank Priya di, Jiju and Sanya for providing me a 'home away from home'. 'Thank you' Shuchi di and Rani for being the sweet sisters that you are, sharing all my responsibilities at home to enable me concentrate on this work.

This dissertation on 'friendship' could not have been completed without the support and encouragement of my friends. I take this opportunity to thank all my friends for their help in forming my understanding of friendship much before I took up this study. I would specially like to thank Satyendra, Neneo, Alka di and Lalit who showed faith in me even at times when I lost faith in myself and helped me both directly and indirectly in the completion of this work. 'Thank you all for being there already before I realized that I needed you.' I also want to thank Suniti, Nabila, Ashwani, Amit, Pawan, and Anuj for being constant sources of encouragement.

Last but not the least; I want to thank each and every person who has helped either directly or indirectly in the completion of this work and in bringing it to its present shape.

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Introduction

Friendship is an important aspect of human life. The value of friendship for personal development has been recognized and emphasized across cultures and traditions. Irrespective of our age, gender, class, caste, or status, almost every one of us values and cares for friendship. Empirical researches in animal psychology have claimed that even higher animals engage in friend-like behaviour. James H. Leuba describes that, "At the beginning of organic life, each individual lives altogether for himself; there is not even an interdependence of male and female for the maintenance of the species; each individual can reproduce himself by himself and so lives totally for himself. It seeks its own good only. Higher up, family life appears; a social organization uniting a male, a female, and their offspring for mutual help and protection is in evidence. In the animals commonly regarded as highest in the scale of development, especially the great apes, the enlargement of the social units within which the urge operates has proceeded so far as to include several families. Within these groups an ethics of friendship prevails. Under certain circumstances monkeys extend the ethics of amity even to the whole of their kind. They will band together to defend one of their own. It is the distinction of humanity to have completed--in theory, if not in practice--the

extension of the ethics of friendship to the whole sentient creation.”¹ Thus, while the lower orders of life are isolated and self-sufficient, as we move higher in the evolutionary ladder, interaction and interdependence increases. In other animals, this interaction and interdependence is mostly to the extent of biological ties, or is evident in case of group activities. In case of human beings it gets realised to the form of personal relationships, like friendship.

Monika Keller states the results of her research in the field of developmental psychology as, “While there are many similarities in the meaning and function of friendship, different societal conditions also give rise to different saliencies of certain aspects of friendship and of the dilemma situation.... Overall, these findings reveal direct societal influence on personal relationships.”² She points out that we find not only similarities but differences also when we study friendship from a cross-cultural perspective. Shelly Budgeon holds that “Unlike family or kin, friendship is not constituted by socially defined purposes or functions. Therefore, it allows for the recognition of individually defined needs, which evolve within the terms of the relationship itself.”³ Foucault has argued that friendship does not consist in obeying of ‘ready made formulas’. Friendship does not have to face the strong regulatory force of the social institutions. He considers it to be an

¹ James H. Leuba, Sources of Humanism in Human Nature, *Humanist*, March 2001.

² Monika Keller, ‘A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Friendship Research’ ISBBD Newsletter, Serial No.46(2), 10-11, 14.

³ Shelly Budgeon, ‘Friendship and Formations of Sociality in Late Modernity: the Challenge of ‘Post Traditional Intimacy’, *Sociological Research Online*, Volume 11, Issue 3, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/11/3/budgeon.html>

essential feature of relations falling outside institutional framework and regulatory norms to invent their own codes, practices, and values. Friendship as a voluntary, non-institutionalized relation provides a possibility for what Foucault calls a 'way of life' that can 'be shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity.'⁴

The following selection of remarks and proverbs commonly known across different cultures, traditions, and religions may help to bring out not only the universal importance of friendship but also its diverse conceptions.⁵ According to the holy Bible, "two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe unto him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.) And also that, "An honest answer is the sign of true friendship." (Proverbs 24:26). According to a Swedish proverb, "Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief." And a Sicilian proverb says, "Only your real friends will tell you when your face is dirty." Again, "Hold a true friend with both your hands." says a Nigerian Proverb. A Czech proverb remarks, "Do not protect yourself by a fence, but rather by your friends."

⁴ Rabinow, P., *The Essential Works of Michael Foucault*, (Vol. 1, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Penguin, London, 1997)

⁵ The various quotations and phrases quoted here have been taken from, <http://www.bellaonline.com/about/quotations> and http://www.indianchild.com/friendship_quotes_site

According to Epicurus (3rd century B.C.), "We do not so much need the help of our friends as the confidence of their help in need." In the words of Euripides (408 B.C.), "One loyal friend is worth ten thousand relatives." "I keep my friends as misers do their treasure, because, of all the things granted us by wisdom, none is greater or better than friendship." says Pietro Aretino. (CE 1537) Kahil Gibran was of the view that "Let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit." Mahatma Gandhi held that, "It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business." And George Washington had remarked that, "True friendship is a plant of slow growth, and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity, before it is entitled to the appellation." According to Henry David Thoreau, "The language of friendship is not words but meanings."

Muhammad Ali rightly remarks, "Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything." The Concise Oxford dictionary defines friendship as 'the relation when one is joined to another in intimacy and mutual benevolence independently of sexual or family love' whereas the Collins English dictionary defines a friend as 'a person known well to another and regarded with liking, affection and

loyalty'. According to the Penguin English dictionary a friend is a 'person for whom one feels affection and whom one knows intimately'. Webster Universal dictionary defines a friend as a 'person for whom one entertains feelings of affection, esteem, respect and with whom one associates frequently and intimately'. A few other terms used for 'friend' include 'companion, helper, associate and patron'. The Compact Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus lists 'affection, alliance, amity, association, attachment, closeness, comradeship, fellowship, fondness, harmony, and intimacy' as synonyms for friendship. From the above characterization it becomes clear that friendship includes relationships ranging from playmate to colleague and supporter to sympathizer. According to the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, friendship is, "a voluntary, close, and enduring social relationship. The behavior of friends varies greatly among societies and situations and according to personality variables. Values about friendship vary less and can be summarized as involving closeness, solidarity, absence of ulterior ends, reciprocity, impulsiveness in mutual choice, and, perhaps, independence of social distinctions such as age, sex, and class"⁶ Thus it comes out that some of the commonly accepted features of friendship include intimacy, affection, loyalty and a sense of voluntariness. This is one relationship where the relationship itself dies when these feelings cease to exist. Friendship can exist

⁶ David L.Sills Ed. '*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*' (vol 5), p12, The Macmillan Company &The Free Press, New York

only between people who care for each other. A friend is cared for his own sake.

Friendship is a relationship, which one enters on one's own choice. One values the friend for what he or she is. In case of family and other kinship relations, the demands or expectations for love and care come just by the very institution of the relation. Since these relations are given to us, our individual choices do not matter in the same manner as in the case of friendship. On the other hand in case of contractual relationships such as business partners, employer-employees etc. we are valued for the sake of return that we bring to one another in terms of the contract. Friendship can be contrasted with both familial and contractual relations on the ground that it is a relation where an individual is valued for what one is.

There is often a divergence of views over the question as to who can become friends? Is it that only like become friends or are people attracted towards those whose personality is a contrast to their own? While there may be no single correct answer to such questions, still it has to be accepted that there has to be a commonality in some aspects for two people to become interested in each other. It doesn't mean here that two people can only become friends when they share the same views about everything in life. Arguments among friends are very much possible. What is being emphasized in the claim about

commonality is just that there have to be some issues of common interest among friends on which conversations among them are possible, for conversation is an important feature of friendship. Mutual respect is very important in a friendship. Cicero had emphasized the importance of mutual respect when he remarked, "...if respect is gone, friendship has lost its brightest jewel."⁷ However close a friendship may be, there are bound to be differences among friends, which can only be reconciled when we learn to appreciate and respect 'the other' as different and independent from us.

It would be good to look at the different types of inter-personal and social relationships among human beings to appreciate the uniqueness and distinctive character of friendship as a human relation. Brenda Almond holds that "There are essentially three kinds of bonds between human beings: 1. Biological and natural 2. Legal and artificial 3. Social and voluntary"⁸ The relationship that exists between parent and child or brothers and sisters can be termed under the first category. These relationships are 'given' to us in the sense that one cannot choose one's parents or siblings. In the contemporary times though it is now possible for parents to choose to have or not to have a child, yet they cannot choose 'the child' they want to have. The bonds of kinship stay with us all our life. We cannot disown the biological ties even if we want to. In the cases of extreme differences, parents may socially and

⁷ M.T.Cicero, *On Friendship*, trans. By E.S.Shuck burg, p 37.

⁸ Brenda Almond, 'Human Bonds', Applied Philosophy ,ed..by Brenda Almond and Donald Hill, Routledge, London and New York, p 60

legally disown their children or brothers may decide to split in all practical terms, but still the relationship cannot be denied by the concerned individuals. The second kind of relationships, that is, legal and artificial relationships, include contractual relations like that between employer and employee or business partners. Here the relationship is based on agreed terms and conditions of agreement and disputes are discussed before hand. In case of any possible conflict, the laws relating to the contract apply and the parties involved always have the option of terminating the contract. Here, there is a freedom of entering as well as walking out of the relationship. The third kind of relationship includes friendship. It is a relation that is voluntary; but unlike contractual relations, there are no legalities involved when two friends conclude that their alliance has lost its charm. This freedom of choice that comes with friendship, by virtue of its being a voluntary relation, gives it an open-ended character. We need to keep in view that even though the contractual relations are also voluntary relations, they do not share the same open-endedness that comes with friendship. When two people enter into a contract, they agree to regulate their relation and conduct in terms of the contract and thus, in a way impose restrictions on their freedom. The terms and conditions of the contract guide and regulate the relation between the contracting parties. Relationships guided by contracts do not enjoy the flexibility that we have in our relations of friendship.

Joan B. Silk offers another classification of relationships in terms of exchange relationships and communal relationships. "In evolutionary terms, exchange relationships rely on Tit-for-Tat reciprocal altruism. However, in communal relationships, benefits are given according to the other's need, and receiving a benefit does not create an obligation to reciprocate. Exchange relationships are thought to characterize relationships among strangers and casual acquaintances, whereas communal relationships are thought to characterize relationships among close friends and kin."⁹ He says that in our exchange relationships we move towards symmetry where a balance between what one gives and what one gets is aimed. On the other hand, in case of communal relationships this symmetry is missing for there is not an expectation of return when a favour is done in such a relationship. He refers to his own and other researches to show that apart from humans, even higher animals like monkeys and apes show communal or friend like behavior. Silk brings out, what according to him, is a paradox of friendship. In our practical lives friendship exists as a mean between the two kind of relationships, such that friends on the one hand disapprove of keeping a record of the deeds that one does for another and on the other hand they expect to be given a fair response from their friends.

People do not become friends on the basis of their momentary or impulsive decisions for short-term advantages. Friendship is a relationship that grows and develops with time. While people can identify and recall the

⁹ Joan B. Silk, *Cooperation without Counting: The Puzzle of Friendship*, p 44.

dates to celebrate the anniversaries of their becoming brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, it cannot be done about becoming friends. We may be able to recall when we met our friend for the first time but we cannot tell the day when we become friends. The same can be said about termination or death of a friendship. Commenting upon situations where such an unbridgeable gap develops between friends Cicero says "... friendship should be allowed to die out gradually by an intermission of intercourse. They should, as I have been told that Cato used to say, rather be unstitched than torn into twain... our friendship should seem to have died a natural rather than a violent death."¹⁰

The changing times have also had an impact on our views about friendship. In the earlier times when people lived in face-to-face communities, they lived in close-knit circles. With the transition from agrarian to industrial societies, and with more recent advancement of technologies of transportation and communication, the boundaries of the world have shrunk and now it is possible for us to contact people thousands of miles away, within seconds. With the availability of postal system, newspaper, radio, television, telephone, fax, internet and e-mail, it has become possible for us to interact with as many people in a single day which may have been unimaginable less than half a century ago to come across in one's whole lifetime. Kenneth Gergen writes that this expansion in our social relations affects us in two ways; firstly there

¹⁰ M. T. Cicero, *On Friendship*, translated By E. S. Shuck burg, p

is perseverance of the past, that is, now it is possible to continue our friendships even when a friend moves far away. Distance doesn't necessarily mean the loss of a friend. Time and distance are not that serious a threat to relationships anymore. Secondly, there is acceleration of the future. In the past, relationships grew slowly for there were long gaps of silence between conversations. The journey from acquaintance to intimacy, which is a process that involves growth in understanding and strengthening of the bond of trust, took a long time but now one can be in touch with each other just by the press of a button or click of a mouse. Earlier, in our childhood, summer vacations meant a long gap in the contact and interaction with school friends but the enthusiasm to meet them and share our experiences grew with each passing day. In today's world, with the rapidly expanding network of cell phones, internet chats and e-mails, keeping in touch is much easier and youngsters can keep themselves updated even about friends who may have gone abroad for vacations. Though friends can be said to have come closer in one sense yet this over-exposure to the technologies has also subdued in some sense the strength with which friends felt for each other earlier. Nowadays when we access the Internet we can simultaneously chat with many people at the same time. Similarly, an sms message or e-mail can be forwarded to many different people at the same time. Such advancement in technology has resulted in a kind of loss in the personal dimension of friendship. Gergen says that "Through the technologies of the century the number and variety of

relationships in which we are engaged, potential frequency of contact, expressed intensity of relationship, and endurance through time all are steadily increasing. As this increase becomes extreme, we reach a state of social saturation.... Through the existing technologies, a sense of affinity may blossom into a lively sense of interdependence within a brief space of time. As the future opens, the number of friendships expand as never before"¹¹ While this increase in communication is a boon in some ways, it comes with an increase in our expectations as well as obligations in our existing relationships. Again the advancement in technology has expanded the range of our social circle where each relation is demanding our attention. Consequently in attempting to meet these divergent demands a person splits in different directions.

Features of friendship that have been mentioned above are not shared by all kinds of friendship. In our everyday life, we often use the term 'friendship' in a casual sense referring to our peers, colleagues, neighbours, and the faintest of acquaintances. It is very much possible that most of friendships grow from and within such relations but none of these can by itself be identified with friendship. In the present world the term friendship is used to refer to many other things that it is not. According to Laurence Thomas

¹¹ Kenneth Gregen, *The Saturated Self: Persons and Relationships in the Information Age*, (Morality and Moral Controversies, ed. By John Arthur, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2002), pp592-93

“Although there is, these days, a rather loose use of the word friend whereby people who barely know each other might refer to one another as friends, absolutely no one is oblivious to the difference between, at one end, friends who are mere acquaintances or who interact socially from time to time-casual friends let us say-and, at the other end, friends who constitute a deep friendship-that is, individuals who are the best of friends.”¹²

Troy A. Jollimore says that generally friendship is taken to be incompatible with the demands of morality because friendship by virtue of being agent-relative expects us to meet some special requirements towards our friends. He states this point as, “The fact that I am a friend of a certain individual is relevant to how I ought to act toward him or her.... The reasons arising from our friendships sometimes take the form of demands or requirements: there are things a good friend must do, and things she must not do. If I fail to act as a friendship demands that I act-i.e. If I on some occasion fail to treat such an individual as a friend-the consequence will at least sometimes be the termination of the friendship. And a friendship cannot exist, of course, between two people who never treat each other as friends.”¹³ He, on the other hand, argues that though it is not proper to say that friendship is an exclusively moral phenomenon, we must admit that often the demands of

¹² Laurence Thomas, *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics* (Vol. 2), Academic Press, London. p 323

¹³ Troy A. Jollimore, ‘Friendship and Agent – Relative Morality’, Garland Publishing, Inc. New York & London, 2001, pp 9-10

friendship are moral demands. In many cases, when one fails to act, as a good friend should, it is due to some sort of lack in the person as a moral agent for as I too shall claim in the subsequent chapters; the demands of morality are strengthened and not endangered by the spirit of friendship.

C. S. Lewis has emphasized on the particularity and exclusiveness of friendship. He says that we come across many different people in our lives but there are only a few with whom we become friends. These few are those with whom we not only share our time and space but also our thoughts and interests. He draws a distinction between mere companions and friends. In his own words, "Friendship arises out of mere companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden).... The man, who agrees with us that some question, little regarded by others, is of great importance, can be our friend. He need not agree with us about the answer"¹⁴

Caring is yet another indispensable feature of friendship, It is generally accepted that when we care for our friend, we do so for his own sake. But we often see that this act of caring in our daily lives is not always guided by the sole motive of benevolence. In most cases it is, in some form or the other, also

¹⁴ C. S. Lewis (2002 - first published 1960) *The Four Loves*, London: HarperCollins, pp78-79

an act of adding to one's own happiness. Thus caring can be either 'intrinsic care', when we care for a friend for his own sake or 'extrinsic care', when we care because his well being, in some way, becomes linked to our own happiness. There need not be any conflict between caring for one's own happiness and caring for one's friend; actually in most cases they become very much compatible by virtue of both the individuals sharing their joys and sorrows as friends.

Neera K. Badhwar has divided friendships broadly into two categories- 'Ends-friendship' and 'Means-friendship', 'Ends-friendship' is for the sake of what the person is, i.e., the character of the person and for this reason she also calls it character friendship. Means-friendship has its basis in some sort of a motive for benefit from the other. This classification is based on Aristotle's account of friendship, which she defends. She says that in the case of end friendships, a person is regarded as an end and not as a means toward some future end- be it pleasure, social recognition or else. Means friendships, on the other hand, value the person for his usefulness. She says here that this does not mean that ends friendships are not of any help in times of need, for if it was so, it would be difficult to call them friendships. The difference is that

motive for usefulness is not the primary reason for the end-friendship to exist.¹⁵

The concept of 'friendship' is an essentially contested concept. The term 'essentially contested concept' was introduced by Walter Bryce Gallie to help in the understanding of the different interpretations of the abstract concepts like art, social justice, and duty.¹⁶ Following Gallie, H.L.A. Hart points out that, "An essentially contested concept is one where there is widespread agreement on an abstract core notion itself (e.g., "fairness"), whilst there is endless argument about what might be the best instantiation, or realization of that notion."¹⁷ The Concept of person is a perfect example of an essentially contested concept as against that of a human being. While it is not difficult to specify the criteria of being a member of the human species, the attempts to specify criteria for personhood give rise to very many debates. Thus essentially contested concepts are those concepts regarding which agreement doesn't come easy because these are open-textured, multi-functional, multi-dimensional without having any fixed or clear boundaries. The particular view of the concept that an individual takes to be the best may be related to his social and psychological background. This becomes clear in the case of

¹⁵ Neera K. Badhwar, 'Friends as ends in themselves', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.48, no.1, Sep 1987, p 3.

¹⁶ Walter Bryce Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 56, 1956, pp 167-198)

¹⁷ Wikipedia: 'Essentially Contested Concepts'. This view of 'essentially contested concept' is taken from Hart, H.L.A., *The Concept of Law*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford), 1961, p 156

concept of friendship as we normally assign it that value which we may hold high as the most representative feature of friendship. So, for someone who ranks fidelity quite high in the desirable feature of a person, friendship may be understood as 'sharing of an exceedingly high level of mutual trust'. Monika Keller holds that "...friendship is a relationship that results from both social and personal conditions. In order to understand friendship it must be studied as a diverse and multifaceted phenomenon among psychologists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists and even biologists."¹⁸

Friendship is a multi-faceted concept that demands a proper understanding of it from various perspectives. The various issues related to friendship range from ethical, like should friendship be treated as a good in itself, to epistemic i.e. how do we know who are our friends, and from ontic issues like what is it to be a friend, to social concerns like does civic friendship result in an improved standard of social justice. Friendship also penetrates into the fields of politics in the contexts of coalition governments and international relations and concerns phenomenologists too. The concept is also studied from sociological, psychological and anthropological perspectives to find how friendships effect and are affected by our cultural, social and emotional make-up.

¹⁸ Monika Keller, 'A Cross- Cultural Perspective on Friendship Research' ISBBD Newsletter, Serial No.46(2), pp10-11, 14.

In case of friendship, it is very difficult to draw unchallengeable conclusions about its very nature. For it has as many forms as there are people. People become friends for different motives, with different attitudes and in different situations. It can be said that friendship is an umbrella term that covers a lot of things under it. Aristotle has pointed out in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, "...it is out of the question to attempt to define up to what point they may continue friends; for you may remove many points of agreement and the friendship lasts nevertheless."¹⁹ The variety in the kinds of friendship that we see around us, makes it difficult to assess the strength of the bond when someone is referred as a friend. Even the literature on friendship sometimes includes the concept in the sense of brotherly love for the whole of humanity, or referring to erotic relations between individuals and so on. There is a need to differentiate between 'philia' on the one hand and 'eros' or 'agape' on the other.

The ethical issues related to friendship are many. One of the primary questions that is present in contemporary debates is related to the understanding of friendship as agent-relative. It is said that a moral theory must be agent-neutral, that is, the rules of morality must apply universally, but

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by D.P.Chase; London and Toronto; J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd., 1934, p194.

as Sarah Stroud points out, "We care more about what befalls our friends than about what happens to strangers, and we are more motivated to advance our friends interests than those of strangers We seem even to have special responsibilities toward our friends which we don't have toward strangers."²⁰ It can be a matter of debate whether friendship is against the principles of morality and caring for a friend is an immoral act. The answer to the questions is 'no'. It has in fact often been said that being good and virtuous are the prerequisite of friendship. As Harriet Beecher Stowe says, "I am speaking now of the highest duty we owe our friends, the noblest, the most sacred--that of keeping their own nobleness, goodness, pure and incorrupt. If we let our friend become cold and selfish and exacting without remonstrance, we are no true lover, no true friend."²¹

The concepts like freedom, trust, equality, belonging, and care that are embedded in the concept of friendship are regarded as important philosophical concepts. If the task of philosophy is taken to be the 'logical clarification of thought', as stated by Wittgenstein, friendship with all the ambiguities and divergent views attached to it evolves as a subject that needs and deserves a careful consideration. According to Jack Marsh, "Friendship cannot be subsumed under completely ethical terms or under completely erotic or filial

²⁰ Sarah Stroud, 'Epistemic Partiality in Friendship', (*Ethics*, vol. 116, April 2006,) p 498.

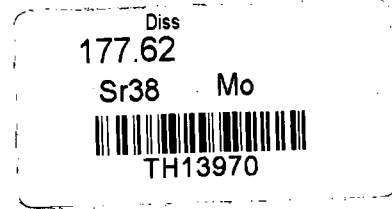
²¹ The quotation has been taken from, <http://www.bellaonline.com/about/quotations>

terms... personal friendship appears as an irreducible excess reducible to neither ethics nor enjoyment, while nevertheless passing through ethics and enjoyment...Friendship marks a space of non-violent familiarity and exteriority, a state of solidarity between identity and difference."²²

We propose to probe during the course of our study issues that have attracted the attention of philosophers in the ethics of friendship. These include questions like, is friendship basically an egoistic concept or does it aim towards benevolence. The debate in this context is primarily whether love and care for a friend is rooted in self-love or is it that caring for a friend comes from the realization of the individuality and separateness of the friend from our own self. The concept of justice, as being fair, equal, and impartial is also discussed as being incompatible with friendship. It is argued that the basic nature of friendship as a personal and particular relationship stands against the demands of justice. We shall be discussing these issues in the subsequent chapters to assess the possibility of friendship in the life of a moral agent. For enabling us to accomplish this task we shall begin with an overview of the discussions of some of the ancient philosophers on the subject of friendship. This will be followed by a consideration of some recent discussions.

²² Jack Marsh, 'Friendship Otherwise-Towards a Levinasian Description of Personal Friendship', *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, Vol. 5, Edition 2, Dec, 2005.

Chapter 1



Understanding Friendship: Philosophical writings on Friendship

Friendship has been a topic of philosophical discussions since the time of ancient Greek philosophy. Love and friendship have been the topics of many of Plato's dialogues like Phaedrus, Symposium and Lysis. Among these, Lysis is considered as the one that deals with friendship in particular. Friendship has also been discussed at length by Aristotle in his book Nicomachean Ethics. Cicero's treatise, 'On Friendship' is yet another important work in this field. In the Christian era both Aquinas and Augustine have discussed the value of friendship. Kant included friendship in his discussions in 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral' and 'Doctrine of Virtue'. Among the contemporary philosophers, Derrida's name deserves special mention. His book 'Politics of Friendship' can be regarded as one of the most detailed work on the topic in recent times. The questions that were addressed by various philosophers in their writings include: What is friendship? What are different kinds of friendship? Who can become friends? What are the limits of friendship? What is the relation of friendship with other



Plato's *Lysis*

In this dialogue Plato describes what friendship is, by showing with the help of different arguments that who are the people that can be friends, why is friendship needed, what are the motives of friendship and so on. Like most other Socratic dialogues, here too Plato reflects on the various negative instantiations of the concept of friendship. The general form *Lysis* as a dialogue differs from most other Socratic dialogues in the fact that in *Lysis*, Socrates, instead of questioning his interlocutors about their conception of friendship, himself offers various views. Once his audience is convinced about a particular view, Socrates goes on to show its shortcomings. The dialogue focuses more on what cannot be included in friendship rather than what precisely friendship is. Socrates is invited by Hippothales for a conversation. Hippothales is attracted to *Lysis* and when he is accused by others of praising *Lysis* beyond limits, Socrates offers to show him how one ought to talk to his beloved. The discussion finally centers on friendship as Socrates talks with *Lysis* and his friend Menexenus.

Socrates starts the discussion by suggesting different views and conceptions about friendship. As an answer to the question that what is it that makes two people to be recognized as friends he considers two possibilities.

Firstly he offers the thesis that even if only one person loves the other without any reciprocity, both are friends. This idea is rejected by him on the ground that none can be friends in the absence of mutual love, for if one loves the other and is hated in return then the person is the other's enemy and so they cannot be friends. For example, according to Socrates, a person may love his animals but this would not mean that they are friends. Even in case of parent-child relationships, the parents love their children more than anything in this world but are hated in return, at times, for the child is too young to understand their love and can only see the punishment he is subjected to. Plato has used these examples to analyze friendship but it can be argued that they are more the cases of love than friendship and there is a need to differentiate between the two. Mary P. Nichols brings out aptly the difference between love and friendship when she says, "Unlike love, friendship is necessarily reciprocal. Of course a friend might not have loved in return, but if he did not do so, he would not become a friend, whereas a beloved who even hates could still be loved. One's love does not secure another's love in return (212b-c). One cannot become a friend unless another does so as well."²³

Next Socrates tries to search for a criterion on which friendship is based. The different views on the issue include: friendship as based on the

²³ Mary P. Nichols, Friendship and community in Plato's *Lysis*, *Review of Politics*, Vol.68, No.2, Winter 2006, p 11

which is good, because of the disease, which is surely an evil. He cautions here, though, that for such friendship to happen it is important that the body has not been totally corrupted by the evil. He points here to the fact that there is always a motive or purpose for friendship. The body is the friend of the physician for the sake of medicine and the friend of medicine for the sake of health, but moving on the same line of thought one ought to think of some kind of first principle for friendship.

He seems to settle here with the idea that friendship is based on the notion of desire and desire always has its origin in some sort of lack within us, for in the absence of this lack the good shall be useless for us, just as a healthy man does not need the medicines. He is admitting here that friendship is based on a lack in one and the usefulness of the other. He soon realizes that such a friendship will continue only till that lack is present or the evil destroyed. It is interesting to note here that the various examples used by Plato to bring out the different aspects of friendship, like the relation between body and health or sickness and medicine reflect the way how Greek thinkers used to apprehend nature, society and self. The metaphors of 'organ' and 'organism' were commonly used by thinkers of those times that were replaced by the later thinkers in the form of a more mechanical conception. Further, he reflects on the idea that congeniality is the criterion for friendship

Aristotle on Friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle has devoted two significant chapters of his book *Nicomachean Ethics* in discussing the concept of friendship. The importances that he gives to friendship or friends are evident from his claim that, "...no one would choose to live without friends though he should have all the other good things in life."²⁵ At many occasions, he seems to be carrying forward the issues raised by Plato. For example, he also considers the questions such as, which are the people that can be regarded as friends, what are the motives behind friendship, what is the criterion of friendship and such. At some point, he clarifies the views offered by Plato like what does it mean when he says that friendship is possible only among the good. At some other, he starts off from some idea which Plato has just touched upon, like congeniality as a criterion for becoming friends, and elaborates on it. Like when Plato discusses the question that what the criterion of friendship is, he rejects each of the ideas when he finds counter-examples to it. Aristotle has, on the other hand, shows that there is not just one criterion of friendship. Friendships can be based on pleasantness, utility, or the character of a person.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by D.P. Chase, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London and Toronto, 1934, p 182.

Aristotle explains the feeling shared by friends as that, friends should have kindness towards one another and should wish each other good and also that this feeling should be mutually known. He thinks that the feeling of friendliness could be attributed to nature itself because it is found in parents and offspring towards each other, as well as in people coming from the same community and moving on like this, it can be stated, in general, between man to man.

Aristotle has broadly classified all friendships into three kinds- friendships for the sake of pleasure, for the sake of utility and finally, the most important is the one based on character. This classification has invited a lot of criticism from later philosophers. Aristotle is accused of including all relations based on pleasure and utility too under the category of friendship. His critics hold that the inclusion of such relations may result in a very vague idea of friendship. But it should be acknowledged here that Aristotle has repeatedly pointed out that it is the friendship based on character that is of the best and permanent kind. Aristotle's discussions on friendship include both the ideal as well as the real accounts of friendship. The ideal conception of friendship provides us with the norms that act as practical guide in our actual relationships.

In case of character friendship, friendship is not for what it brings in return but for what a person is worth of, and you care for the person not because he is useful or pleasurable to you but for his own sake. He accepts that such kind of friendship is not to be commonly found, because for one, such people are very rare and secondly, it requires a certain amount of time and closeness to initiate a friendship at that level. When people are friends, because of some profit that they receive from the other, they are actually never the friend of the other but their own and as soon as their motive is satisfied the friendship ceases to exist.

Aristotle accepts that the people whose friendships are based on character take pleasure in each other's company, for it is very important in a friendship that friends be able to spend time together and be able to appreciate similar things. So, although they share the pleasure and often utility, as a friend often tries to provide for the other, these are secondary in such friendships because these are not the actual reason why such friendship exists at all.

He also discusses friendship, which is shared among people who are not equal, but where one partner is superior to the other. For this, he gives the examples of friendship existing between husband and wife, parent and

offspring and so. In such cases, both the partners do not derive the same things out of their friendship but still these tend to be permanent and equitable. He argues that equality must somehow be worked out in a friendship for people who are separated too much it becomes difficult to share a friendship, like in case of God or king and the common man. But, he admits at the same time that it is very difficult to draw the line as to what extent this difference is compatible within a friendship.

Aristotle adds that the issue of equality raises the question that, 'do people really wish for their friends the very best of everything?' for if, that is the case the friends may attain a position where it becomes difficult to continue the friendship at all. He says, one will wish good to one's friend only to the extent that they can still enjoy their friendship, for he argues that all men desire their own good most of all. Such admissions often lead his critics to declare his theory as an egoistic one but Talbot Brewer rightly suggests that it is a mistake to consider self-love to be psychologically basic. He says, "Rather, self-love and love of others both become increasingly possible as a friendship deepens and moves toward its own proper telos."²⁶

²⁶ Talbot Brewer, *Virtues We Can Share: Friendship and Aristotelian Ethical Theory*, *Ethics*, Vol. 115, No. 4, July 2005, p737

Aristotle regards friendship to be even more important than justice, saying that just people are still in need of friendship but friendship needs no laws of justice over it. He says, "...when people are in Friendship, Justice is not required; but, on the other hand, though they are just they need Friendship in addition, and that principle which is most truly just is thought to partake of the nature of Friendship." (1155a34-38). He also holds the view that just as there is a difference of degrees in friendship so is also in case of justice and it can be said that justice is proportional to friendship. In spite of his strong commitment towards the idea of friendship he admits that it has a lot of debatable issues attached to it. He also reflects on the issues taken up by Plato such as who can be friends? What are the kinds of friendship and whether the 'goodness' that is talked of in the context of friendship is subjective or absolute.

Aristotle says that people are generally more keen on being the object of friendship rather than having the feeling themselves and so they end up having flatterers who appear to be friends but they praise you only in the hope of some favours in return. The one, who is the object of friendship here, enjoys the honours in others' eyes as well as his own, but this is not an example of genuine friendship, for friendship consists in feeling rather than being the object of this feeling. Aristotle gives here the example of the love of

a mother who leaves her child to be adopted by some other for the sake of his better future, and is happy and content loving him, knowing very well that the feeling will never be returned.

Aristotle seems to hold the view that equality and similarity play an important role in friendship but accepts that those friendships that are based on the motives of profit are mostly among people who are in some way contrary to each other, like the poor and the rich or the ignorant and the wise. He accepts that friendship is reinforced by the sameness of group by virtue of coming from the same tribe, city, or so. That precisely could be the reason behind the strong feeling among parents and their children or among children who come from the same parents. They share so many things in common that the motives of pleasure and profit are also incorporated into it more than into any relationship out of one's own family. Sameness of age among brothers or cousins, he says, is another cause that leads to strong bonding of friendship, because people in the same age group can easily share each other's thoughts. Friendship between spouses is kind of following the law of nature, for he says that man is more disposed to be in pair than associate in groups. He asserts here that family comes before community. In this kind of friendship, he holds, both pleasure and profit are involved and if they are good people, so is 'virtue'.

Aristotle accepts that there can be conflicts in friendship though their nature can be different with different types of friendships. Blaming one's friend or finding faults with them according to him is a feature exclusive to the friendships based on the motive of profit. It is so because in the friendship between virtuous people both friends try to do the other good so there is no question of finding fault and in those based on pleasure, the issue of finding faults does not arise because they are too delighted in each other's company. In case of utility friendships, on the other hand one of the partners may feel dissatisfied with what it is getting out of the relationship and find fault with the other. So in such friendships, one must be certain from the very beginning about the profits one is receiving and on what conditions-moral or legal, as the case may be, is the other doing these favours.

Conflicts also arise in friendship between unequal, because each party here claims to get more out of the relationship. The one who is superior feels he is entitled for more as happens in a business partnership that the one who puts more gets a larger share in the profit. On the other hand, the one who is inferior thinks that by having a person who is better off than himself, as a friend, he is entitled to receive more from the friendship to fulfil his needs. Aristotle says that what is important here is not 'how much' but 'what', for

both the partners have different things to get. The needy person may get, say; money for his needs while the other receives respect and honour for his deeds.

Thus Aristotle's account of friendship tries to include the different aspect of friendship. Though he is sometimes accused of contradictions and ambiguity in his theory but it should be kept in mind that he has discussed, under the head of *philia*, a very broad range of relationships. Whatever small conflicts arise can also be discounted on the ground that he was not just giving an ideal theory of friendship but reviewing its practical implications too.

Cicero's On Friendship

Cicero's discourse 'On Friendship' starts with the admission that friendship is a subject that is worthy of everybody's investigations. The treatise is in the form of a dialogue, in which, *Laelius*, the main speaker is talking to his two sons-in-law, *Gaius Fannius* and *Quintus Mucius*, who come to call on him after the death of Africanus, a dear friend of his. The two start the conversation with the question that how is *Laelius*, being the wise man

nothing good in death, at least there is nothing bad."²⁷ He prefers to believe that the soul of his friend has ascended to the gods, and sorrow in that case points to jealousy and not friendship. He shares the secret of their friendship as being the harmony of tastes and pursuits.

Laelius maintains that friendship is something that is needed by us both in our good times as well as bad times. It can exist only between good men. He cautions here that by 'good', he is not referring to some ideal being but that it is only a practical criterion. He says, "I do not, however, press this too closely, like the philosophers who push their definition to a superfluous accuracy. They have truth on their side, perhaps, but it is of no practical advantage...we must concern ourselves with the facts of everyday life as we find it-not imaginary and ideal perfections."²⁸ Good men, he says, are those, "whose actions and lives leave no question as to their honour, purity, equity, and liberty; who are free from greed, lust and violence; and who have the courage of their convictions."²⁹ Laelius says that friendship is initiated by the closeness of people; hence we are more affectionate towards our neighbours and relatives than strangers. But such friendship that develops solely for the reason that these people are closer to us in terms of geographical or biological

²⁷ Cicero, M.T., *On Friendship*, trans. by Shuck burg, E.S., Harvard classics (ed.) by Eliot, Charles W., volume 9, (New York, P.F. Collier & Son corporation, 1959), p 14

²⁸ *ibid*, p 15

²⁹ *ibid*, p 16

ties is not permanent. He differentiates between friendship and relationship on the ground that while the latter exists even with the lack of affection the former cannot.

Cicero holds that the friendship he is talking of is born out of virtue but emphasizes again that he is not using these terms in the form of ideals, but as they are commonly understood. He regards friendship as the greatest gift of gods, apart from wisdom. Friends are needed to share our deepest secrets with absolute confidence. Friends add to our joys and help us deal with our misfortunes by sharing and being with us. He compares the usefulness of friendship with fire and water. The extent of sharing according to Cicero is such that one cannot be poor if his friend is rich and even if he's weak he has the strength of his friend. He holds the friend to be a 'second self'. He discusses further the reason for which people become friends. Is it that we come close to another due to some kind of lack in us? He rejects the idea on the ground that the motive of the advantage of overcoming our lack cannot give rise to a friendship that is sincere and genuine. He says that it is love which result in the instinctive feeling of friendship. He says that love is the prime mover here for nothing else inspires love. For if friendship had any baser motive, it would end with the fulfilment of it. But real friendships are eternal. However, to maintain a friendship till eternity is not an easy task.

There are numerous factors that come up in the course of time. There can be divergent views as well as incompatibility in the priorities of friends, that spring up because of situations as well as the passage of time.

These factors give rise to the question that, in case of conflicts arising between friends what should one do? Is it more important to attend to the call of friendship or should we act according to what we think is right? Cicero's answer here is that a wrong deed cannot be justified on the ground that it was performed for the sake of friendship. He says that since friendship is built on the foundation of virtue it cannot stand when the foundation itself is broken. Whereas if we take the duties of friendship as the highest, both the friends need to be perfectly wise for preventing the occurrence of a mischief. He says that in friendship it is wrong to ask or to agree to do something, which is wrong. It should be a rule of friendship to indulge in only those things that are good.

Laelius further discusses the other prevalent views regarding friendship. He says that the Greeks believe that too much of closeness in friendship must be avoided for each has enough of one's own sorrows to burden himself with that of his friends. Another group holds that it is always those who are lacking in some form, who seek friendship, i.e., it is the poor

that though new friends have their own charm the value of an old friend cannot be over-shadowed. One should always try to match the level of one's friends. If we are better off in any sense we should be willing to share our fortunes with our friends. But he cautions at the same time that the other party, in such situations, should neither grumble at the friend's position nor become too demanding. We must wait till the development of our characters before we decide on who are our real friends. Laelius says, "It is only these mature friendships that can be permanent. For difference of character leads to difference of aims, and the result of such diversity is to estrange friends."³⁰ As it happens during the growing years, young people consider their playmates to be their real friends, but if spending maximum time becomes the criterion of friendship, our best friend would be our nurses and tutors. Sameness of character is very important in case of a mature friendship.

Cicero holds that friendship also suffers sometimes because of an excessive attraction of people towards their friends. We often need to separate from our friends for their betterment, and a true friend should be able to accept the situation for the reward it brings to the friend. There are also situations when the friendship can be continued no longer. If the end of a friendship becomes unavoidable, it is better to let it die slowly in the absence

³⁰ Ibid, p 34

of communication rather than bringing it to a violent end. Thus, one should firstly aim at avoiding an end of friendship if it has to happen, it should be the least violent, and further in any case we should always avoid an enmity with our friends. For the worst that can happen is to be at war with someone who had been intimate with you. Problems in friendship often arise because people do not seek friends for their own sake, but for some further advantage. Cicero says that just as we love ourselves for no further reason, the feeling as such needs to be extended towards our friends, that is, a friend is to be regarded as a 'second self'. It often happens that we seek in our friends those qualities that we ourselves lack. The best way is to first become good ourselves and then search for a friend to match in virtue, for friendship in the absence of virtue is impossible.

Friendship is important for everybody. There are people who value riches but others who are happy with whatever little they have. Again, there are those who value status and power and others who think these to be hollow things. But friendship appeals to everybody no matter what his or her view of life is. Even those who prefer to be alone than socialize too need at least someone to share their feelings with. It seems that even nature itself is against isolation. Cicero says that people often seek reassurance from their friends, and often stating the facts attracts trouble. But in no case should a

friend adopt flattery, for a person should aim at his friend's welfare and not at pleasing him. Honesty and frankness are very important in a friendship. The expressions between friends need to be genuine and not fake or artificial. Truthfulness forms the foundation of friendship.

Cicero concludes by saying that virtue is most important for friendship and it is responsible for the harmony between friends. His account of friendship relies heavily on Aristotle's, but M.E. Doyle and M.K. Smith have rightly quoted Anthony Gottlieb saying that, "the fact that Cicero had almost nothing original to say was of little significance given how beautifully he said it."³¹

The above discussions bring out the various features of friendship. The views expressed by these philosophers in the past are relevant even in the present time. This shows that though the change in time and culture has had its impact on some aspects of friendship, there are some other essential features and issues that still hold importance. The question that caring for a friend involves genuine concern for the friend or is it ultimately guided by self-love is an issue that finds place even in the contemporary debate. There is also the issue of the role and scope of friendship in our overall system of

³¹ Doyle, M. E. and Smith, M. K. (2002) 'Friendship: theory and experience', *the encyclopaedia of informal education*, Last update: January 28, 2005.

virtues. We shall try to figure the role of friendship in relation to specific virtue like justice.

It is found that the idea of friendship as a relation that exists between good and virtuous people, finds mention in the works of all these three philosophers. Still, there is a difference of opinion among philosophers, on the issue of friendship to be seen as an acceptable moral phenomenon. There are philosophers who argue that friendship should be sacrificed for the maximizing of overall good. Though the strength of their arguments against friendship need to be evaluated. We shall be discussing some of these issues in the next chapters in light of the understanding developed on the basis of the above discussions.

Chapter 2

Egoistic and Altruistic Accounts of Friendship

An issue that has engaged the attention of philosophers in their writings and discussions of friendship is whether it should be regarded as egoistic or altruistic. Some philosophers, such as Lawrence A. Blum, hold that friendship is basically altruistic since caring for one's friends implies a concern for the well being of others.³² On the other hand, some other philosophers, such as Tara Smith and Joe Mintoff, are of the view that caring for a friend is essentially nothing more than an extended form of self-love.³³ The issues involved in the debate about the altruistic and egoistic accounts of friendship are subtle and complicated. This becomes evident when we find that Aristotle's writings on friendship have been interpreted by some in an

³² Lawrence A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980)

³³ See Joe Mintoff, 'Could an Egoist be a Friend', (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2, April 2006) Pp. 101-118; Tara Smith, 'Egoistic Friendship', (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4, October 2005) Pp. 263-277 and 'Rights, Friends and Egoism', (*The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 90, No. 3, March 1993) Pp. 144-148

altruistic light³⁴ while others have seen the same as an instance of egoistic perspective.³⁵ This debate on the nature of friendship still continues and it would be instructive to consider the arguments for and against the altruistic and egoistic accounts or perspectives.

The Egoism / Altruism controversy

It will be good to see what the terms egoism and altruism stand for, in general philosophical discussions, before we begin a consideration of the egoistic and altruistic accounts of friendship. According to the Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy egoism refers to a disposition as well as a theory. As a disposition, egoism is commonly understood as selfishness, but to avoid the negative connotations that the term carries, it could be identified as self-centric behaviour. A person is known as an egoist if he is interested only in satisfying his own desires without giving any consideration to others. In contrast, altruism is explained as a disposition for benevolence or the concern for the welfare of others. In the form of theory, it refers to both a psychological theory as well as an ethical theory. Psychological egoism is a theory that holds that the actual motivation behind all human behaviour is

³⁴ Julia Annas, 'Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism', *Mind*, New Series, (Vol. 86, no. 344, October 1997, Pp.532-554); Charles H. Kahn, 'Aristotle and Altruism', (*Mind- New Series*, Vol. 90, No. 357, January 1981, p 20-40)

³⁵ A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989)

our own interest and those of others does not even arise.³⁶ For Plato, harmony within one's own self as well as in the society is the key to good life and if this harmony is established the question of conflicts does not arise. Similarly, Aristotle had enumerated certain virtues for the attainment of 'eudemonia' or perfect happiness. Exercising of these virtues, removes any possibility of conflict. For these philosophers the real nature of man is to be guided by these virtues.

Richard A. Fumerton has discussed the conflicts between egoism and altruism from the point of view of rationality of actions.³⁷ His complaint against the critics of egoism is that they try to show that there is a logical inconsistency in intrinsically valuing one's own happiness. Such philosophers generally are of the opinion that if what I intrinsically desire is happiness then I ought to value it irrespective of the fact that whether it is my own happiness or the happiness of others. The justification that they offer is that there is no reason to treat one's own happiness as different from the happiness of others. If one cares for his own happiness then consistency demands him to care for other's happiness too. The mistake that these philosophers make is that they take happiness to be an entity independent of an agent whose mental state it is. He on the other hand says, "...as an egoist, when I value intrinsically my

³⁶ Refer to the entry on 'Egoism and Altruism', Routledge *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3.

³⁷ Richard A. Fumerton, *Reason and Morality: A Defence of the Egocentric Perspective* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1990) p 166

happiness, what I value intrinsically is the exemplification of the property happiness conjoined with X, not the exemplification of happiness per se.” Here X refers to my unique properties. He also adds that if we rely on the concept of ultimate end of an agent’s act, it will be very difficult to draw a distinction between an egoistic and altruistic act. He supports this view by referring to Mother Teresa’s behaviour. Fumerton says that it is very much possible that the ultimate end of her altruistic acts may be her own happiness and this creates problem when we also consider the ultimate end of a selfish person, who cares only for his own well being. So while the behaviour of that person may be in total contrast with that of Mother Teresa’s behaviour, that is, Mother Teresa engaged herself in benevolent activities while the other person acts on selfish motives, yet their ultimate ends come out to be the same – their own happiness. Now having said that about egoism and altruism in general, we shall now try to figure the nature of friendship according to this criterion.

Classical debate on altruistic and egoistic views of friendship

In ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, Aristotle has classified friendship into three kinds: (i) friendships based on pleasure, (ii) friendships based on utility, and (iii) friendships based on character. Since the first two of these kinds refer to friendships that are grounded in one’s own pleasure or utility, Aristotle’s

account of friendship is sometimes interpreted as an egoistic account of friendship. Nicholas White remarks, "Much that he says in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII-IX, indeed, lends itself to a baldly egoist construal, as if he openly took it that a person should always and without hesitation or even reflection aim pre-eminently for his own good, even in situations in which his own gain would be his friend's loss."³⁸ The best defence against such an interpretation of Aristotle's account of friendship lies in the third kind of friendship that he regards as the best. Friendships based on the character of a person involve caring for the friend for his own sake. This kind of friendship exists between the good and virtuous men and may not involve situations where the two friends would ever see their interests as competing interest. According to White, Aristotle's view is not egoist in a significant way because, "...the benefit that the individual gains does not come at anyone else's expense, and indeed the benefit of acting nobly is one that both or all can share without loss or competition."³⁹ However, White argues that Aristotle had acknowledged the possibility of conflicts between friends. Aristotle held that when there is a conflict between the interests of the two friends, even the good man would secure his own good first. In '*Nicomachean Ethics*' Aristotle says, "...in all praiseworthy things the good man does, he plainly give to himself a larger share of the honourable. In this sense it is right to be Self-loving..." (1169a47-

³⁸ Nicholas White, '*Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics*' (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2002) p265

³⁹ *ibid*, p265

1169b1). Aristotle's other similar remarks provide a ground for an egoistic interpretation of his views on friendship.

Aristotle held that man is a social and rational animal. The social aspect of him demands reciprocity with others. The rational aspect of man leads him to realize the fact that self-sufficiency as an ultimate end of one's life can only be achieved by being in relation with others and not by living in isolation. While discussing the conception of friendship in Greek ethics, Gadamer has remarked that, "Aristotle is quite aware of the paradox in Plato's doctrine: namely, that someone must be friends with himself in order to befriend someone else, this hardly answers to the usual preconception of friendship and self-love. Thus Aristotle considers himself specially obliged to discuss the aporias of self-love. Clearly he defends its Platonic meaning as opposed to that of common usage...as a moral problem this subject is well known and quite certainly much older, at least in the form that one's being dominated by self-love makes one incapable of friendship."⁴⁰ Gadamer points out that it appears in Aristotle's account of friendship that being a friend of oneself leads one to absolute rule or self-sufficiency. Aristotle realizes the importance of absolute rule over oneself for eudemonia, but he is also aware of the fact that this self-sufficiency still has something lacking. This lack is the improvement

⁴⁰ Hans Georg Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics', *Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics* Trans. by Joel Weinsheimer (Yale University Press, London 1999), p135.

that results from friendship. So, self-love in its positive sense cannot lead someone to think that he doesn't need any friends. Gadamer states Aristotle's views on friends as, "...they understand one another with reference to what they have in common and so succeed in reciprocal co-operation. Friendship leads to an increase in one's own feeling of life and to a confirmation of one's own self-understanding"⁴¹.

The above remarks underline the significance of reciprocal co-operation between friends. This would mean that friendship is not purely altruistic as it rests upon reciprocity. Questioning this view, Lawrence A. Blum argues that friendship should be based on the motive of the good-of one's friend for his own sake. All our acts related to our friend should be guided by this sole motive. Blum says, "...friendship is an altruistic phenomenon, and the locus of the altruistic emotions. This altruistic aspect is essential to friendship; a relationship based solely on mutual advantage (even if it involved mutual liking) would not in this sense be a friendship."⁴² He invokes the Aristotelian claim that perfect friendship can exist only between good and virtuous people to argue that genuine friendship demands a high level of moral excellence. Blum further cautions that, "A truly selfish person could not have friends in the fullest sense. If he were genuinely able to care for another person for his

⁴¹ibid, p138-9

⁴²Lawrence. A Blum, ' *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*', (Rout ledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980), p 43

In an earlier chapter, we had noted that Plato compares the love involved in friendship to the way we love wine or philosophy. On the basis of this comparison Plato concludes that caring here is for one's own sake rather than for the sake of that, which is loved. Julia Annas points out that for Plato these are not the examples of friendship, for here mutual love is not involved.⁴⁵ According to her Plato's account of friendship is essentially an egoistic one. Plato says that we become a friend to someone because there is some sort of 'lack' within us that we try to fill through the friendship. According to her Plato suggests that we may care for someone for his own sake but holds that such desires cannot act as a motivation for friendship. She writes that according to Plato, "...the desire for somebody else's welfare always rests upon and would not exist without, a desire for one's own welfare. Where there is no felt deficiency, and so no desire that relates to the agent's self, there can be no *philia*."⁴⁶

According to Annas, while Plato has been looking at friendship from an egoistic perspective, it is Aristotle who underlined the altruistic aspects of friendship showing that friendly emotions are guided by the good of others. For Annas, to regard Aristotle's account of the perfect kind of friendship as an

⁴⁵ Annas, Julia, 'Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism', *Mind*, New Series, (Vol. 86, no. 344, October 1997), Pp.532-554

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p 537.

egoistic view is being unjust to him. She writes, "The Lysis raised the dilemma that a proper object of love must be desired purely for its own sake, while nonetheless it appears that the agent must want something for himself in desiring it. Aristotle's answer is that the case of wanting something for X purely for X's sake is properly found only in one's own case. So far this looks like merely resolving the dilemma in favour of egoism after all; how could there be such a thing as liking someone else purely for his sake if the prime example of liking X for X's sake is liking oneself? But here is the importance of the idea that a friend is 'another self'; I can, in fact, come to regard my friend in the way I regard myself. This need import no absurdities about thinking of his pains as if they were my pains; what is meant in the context is clearly regarding his desires, and their fulfillment as I do my desires and their fulfillment-that is, attaching as much importance to them, making as great efforts to fulfill them, and so on."⁴⁷ So, it is to be taken that caring for a friend as oneself does not mean that we are talking of caring for a friend in as much as his being my friend is of importance to me and affects me, but rather it is to be taken as development of such a bond between friends where the aspirations, achievements, and failures of my friend generate the same response in me as in case of my own achievements and failure.

⁴⁷ibid, p 542

perspective of friendship. It may be noted that earlier Kahn has regarded acts of benevolence towards one's friend as acts of 'self-referential altruism'. Kahn introduces here a distinction between objective and interest. According to him every act can be regarded as constituted of two parts an objective and an interest. While objective refers to my motive behind acting in that manner, interest explains the reason behind having such motive. He points out that when I care for the well being of others my objective is their own good but my interest in the matter comes from the fact that they stand in a special relation to me and their well being affects my happiness. Kahn sums up the point by saying, "...it is a general characteristic of friendship that it will always admit, and generally include, both an altruistic and a self-regarding element: altruism in the objective, egoism in the interest one takes in the relationship."⁴⁹ Thus for Kahn it is possible to reconcile egoism and altruism in Aristotle's account of friendship.

Aristotle's remarks at several places in 'Nicomachean Ethics' about a friend being 'another self' have invited a lot of interpretation. Some of the philosophers hold that taking the friend to be a second self implies that friendship can only grow out of self-love and so a person who cares for his own happiness can only become a good friend. Others say that this idea

⁴⁹ibid, p 26

demands us to care for the needs and happiness of our friends as we would care for our own. So, it demands us to work for the happiness of our friends with the same zeal as we apply to ensure a happy and better life for ourselves, even if at times, it may come into conflict with our other demands. According to the reading of Aristotle by Talbot Brewer friendship does not lead to a conflict between self-love and the love of other. Rather he holds that, "the capacity to love ourselves and the capacity to love others arise together, as the result of our struggles to perfect the ubiquitous human relationships that Aristotle calls *philia*."⁵⁰

Recent discussions on Altruism v/s Egoism debate

In more recent writings, the contentious issues in the altruism versus egoism debate have been discussed by Michael J. Meyer and Tara Smith. Michael J. Meyer discusses the relevance of rights between friends and regards that the presence of rights between friends takes us away from egoism. He says, "Between close friends one also has a right to concern and respect for one's own sake. A general disposition to respect such a claim seems to be another virtue of friendship-the virtue of mutual altruism. This regard for one's friend for her own sake, and not for the sake of someone else,

⁵⁰ Talbot Brewer, 'Virtues We Can Share: Friendship and Aristotelian Ethics' (*Ethics*, vol. 115, July 2005, no. 4) p 741

care for another, that is, a friend for his own sake are mistaken in thinking so. The objection that is raised against an egoist is that even when he cares for a friend it is guided by the motive of his own happiness because being a friend gives him happiness or makes his life better in some way. Mintoff tries to reject this idea by giving the example of a doctor who may have chosen the profession on the grounds that it gives money, recognition and respect. Here the motivation of becoming a doctor in the first place was to secure a good life for oneself. But when this particular doctor, after rational deliberation chooses to give his patient a particular drug 'A' then this act is guided by the motive of curing his patient by causing him the minimum pain possible. Here curing the patient and minimizing his pain are the only considerations for this choice. The reason for his becoming a doctor does not provide the justification for that cure.

He compares this with the case of two friends, where one of them chooses to spend time with her friend who is in need of her company, instead of going ahead with her plans to go for an exhibition. It is assumed here that going for that exhibition would have made her happier in spite of the given relationship with her friend. If in such a situation, the girl still makes it a point to stay with her friend, then the motive behind this act should be taken as her friendship and as having the friends good as her end. The point that she

entered into this friendship because she considered it would make her life better just does not act as a justification of her behaviour because even if an egoist starts a friendship on the assumption that it would add to his happiness, the particular friendly acts that he engages in, are guided by the concern for his friend for his own sake. In his discussion, Joe Mintoff introduces the constraints of pre-existing ends and 'relevant and admissible options'. He regards the former as those ends that were chosen after rational deliberation. He explains it further as when an egoist decides that it would do him good to befriend a particular person then until there is a change in the character of this person he shall take into consideration his friendship with that person as a pre-existing end whenever a situation demands to choose between the demands of friendship and one's own happiness. He further adds that once a friendship is started, caring for your own happiness on the cost of your friendship no more remains an admissible option. It can also be argued here that while friendship is a source of happiness many of our interests that come into conflict with the demands of friendship amount to mere pleasures and so it is not a good option, even for an egoist, to forgo the friendship for such interests.

Tara Smith is another philosopher who argues that it is very much possible for an egoist to be a friend. She is against the idea that since by virtue

of being egoist a person would value others only instrumentally; hence it is not possible for an egoist to be a friend. Her argument rely mostly on Ayn Rand's philosophy and following her Smith argues that not only it is possible for an egoist to be a friend but also that love is essentially selfish in nature. She agrees with Ayn Rand in considering that to love a person is to 'value' that person for what he is. In our life we come across many different people but become friends only with a few, this shows that love is essentially self-interested. She reports Rand's view on the issue as, "A selfless or disinterested love she maintains, is a contradiction in terms. Since loving is a type of valuing, it would mean that one is indifferent to that which one values." She further writes that, "In the deep forms of friendship that I am focusing on, a lover will respond to his friend's good and bad fortunes as spontaneously, as naturally, and as effortlessly as to his own. He will identify with his friend's struggles, triumphs and failures because his friend's well-being has become one of his significant values, among the things that contribute to his own well-being."⁵⁴

Tara Smith holds that the fact that self-interest is an egoists supreme concern does not entail that it is his only concern. It is generally accepted that

⁵⁴ Smith, Tara, 'Egoistic Friendship', (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4, October 2005) Pp. 263-277

an egoist values others only instrumentally, that is, only as a means to a good life for himself. She asserts that though it can be true of the friendships that Aristotle referred as pleasure-friendships and utility-friendships but in case of the perfect friendships that are based on character and which thus involve love a person is valued for what he is, because the person is valuable to him. She argues that having reasons to love a particular person doesn't make this love any less, but rather it is these reasons that make love rational.

On the basis of these discussions it appears that in case of friendship it is neither easy nor desirable to draw water-tight compartments regarding our acts, and the motives behind those acts, on the basis of the egoism and altruism distinction. Rather it is to be understood as a relationship in which, just by virtue of being friends, the interests of two people merge to the extent that often it is difficult to ascertain that whose interests are playing the real motivation behind the act. This is not to say that a friend is never concerned with his own welfare nor does it imply that purely benevolent acts are out of the scope of friendship. It is just being emphasised here that the conflict of interests that arise in case of rivals or even with strangers are alien to the case of friendship.

Chapter 3

Friendship and Justice

There are always possibilities of conflict of interests among friends. It may be useful to consider some of such possibilities to gain an understanding about the relationship between demands of friendship and demands of justice. Conflicts between friends most commonly arise because either one or both of the friends engage in egoistic acts. Let us take an example where both my friend and me are in need of an important book for our exams that is not available in the market. We somehow come to know that one of our seniors may be having this book with her. Exams are just a few days apart and time is running short. In such a situation each of us may want the book exclusively for oneself and hence there may be a conflict of interest among us.

Conflict of interests need not arise from pursuit of egoistic individual interests alone. There may be a situation where one of my friends comes with the tickets of a musical concert that he thinks I'll enjoy whereas I had assigned the same evening for talking to him about his future plans regarding his career. In this situation, if each of us insists on pursuing our respective plans, there will be a conflict situation. However, this conflict is rooted in our

insistence on pursuing what each of us believes to be in the interests of the other. This shows that conflict situations could also arise when both the friends wish to do good to the other. On the other hand, there can be situations where the question of justice becomes relevant in assessing and resolving conflicts among friends. Let us imagine a situation where one of my friends is participating in an essay competition. He has told me that he has indulged in an intelligent exercise of copy and paste in lieu of original writing expected from the participants in the competition. He has copied most part of his essay from Internet sources. I advise him that to do so is unethical. I suspect that he would submit the essay without heeding my advice. Later on I come to learn that the essay submitted by him is one of the prime contenders for the prize in the competition. Now in this situation, justice demands me to report the fact to the organizers of the competition that the essay is a case of plagiarism. This will help so that the members of the jury to be in a position to give a fair judgement in favour of a more deserving candidate. But how do I know as to how other essays have been compiled or written and submitted. Friendship, therefore, demands me to remain silent for my friend as he has shown trust in me when he confided in me about his act of copying. And so, reporting the issue will mean a breach of trust. In this situation, the conflict can be resolved by introducing the idea of justice as the over-arching virtue. Since the act of cheating is against the laws hence it is just to report against the friend. Some people might prefer to justify this act of reporting the friend's

misdeed on the grounds of friendship itself. They may argue that since cheating is an evil, it is the duty of a good friend to save his friend from indulging in it.

The nature of conflict between the demands of friendship and the demands of justice cannot be properly understood simply on the basis of such particular examples because the conflict arises due to the essential nature of these two virtues. In common discussions, justice is often understood in terms of impartiality or equality. It is suggested that justice demands us to treat everyone impartially and equally. Since friendship, by virtue of its very nature as a particular and personal relationship, demands us to give special attention to our friends, it appears to be in conflict with the demands of justice. What needs to be discussed here is whether there is really an inevitable tension between the two virtues or each of these provides some scope for pursuing the other. Moreover, in case of a discord, which of the two shall be treated as an overarching virtue? Is it possible to reconcile the two? Do demands of friendship deserve a privileging against the demands of justice or is it the other way round. For finding a solution to these issues we shall briefly consider different conceptions of justice and try to figure out the extent and depth of this apparent tension between the two virtues.

Different conceptions of justice and friendship

In book 4 of 'Republic', Plato has discussed the concept of justice. In these discussions, justice is presented as the overarching virtue, which rules a person as well as a society. A human soul is divided into three parts: reason, spirit, and appetites. Corresponding to each of these parts is a class of the society. A person is just when each part adheres to its own function. There are philosophers who are guided by reason, warriors having the prominence of spirit and the peasant class that is ruled by appetite. When each of these three classes performs their role, the result is a just society. Plato has also emphasized thus that social justice consists in 'giving every man his due'. Thus friendship can be justified in Plato's account on the basis of the argument that our friends deserve our attention. Treating them in a special way is giving them their due. Hence caring for a friend is not against justice but rather promoting it.

Aristotle too has accepted justice as a virtue and discussed the concept at length in chapter 5 of 'Nichomachean Ethics'. He suggests that justice can be understood in both the general and the particular sense. In the general sense, justice includes all the habits of good citizens, and this seems closer to Plato's conception. Particular justice on the other hand is one of the virtues among other intellectual and moral virtues. The particular justice, according

to Aristotle can be divided further into distributive and retributive justice. The former is concerned with the fair distribution of goods whereas the latter with restoring the balance between two parties. Aristotle has not only accepted in his account the compatibility of these two virtues, but even argues that among friends, justice is no more required. Sibyl A.Schwarzenbach says, "Aristotle...saw the friendship between citizens (*politike philia*) as a necessary condition for the justice of any political regime"⁵⁵

Mill, Sidgwick, and Rawls have discussed the concept of justice in detail. Though they have not included friendship in their discussions, it would be good to see whether it is possible to find some space for friendship in their accounts of justice. J.S. Mill discusses justice in the last chapter of his book 'Utilitarianism'. The five different notions of justice given by Mill are: "(1) respect for legal rights, (2) respect for moral rights, the rights accorded by an ideal system of law, (3) distribution in according with desert, (4) keeping faith or fulfilling reasonable and justified expectations and (5) impartiality."⁵⁶ Mill points out that commonly a greater importance is given to the sentiments of justice than the sentiments of charity and benevolence. While the former refers to our perfect duties the latter to the imperfect duties. He explains the duties of perfect obligation as 'those duties in virtue of which a correlation

⁵⁵ Sibyl A.Schwarzenbach, 'Democracy and Friendship', (*Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 36, no.2, Summer2005), p234

⁵⁶ Anthony Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics*,(Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1989), p 73.

right resides in some person or persons.' Though impartiality is one of the criteria for defining justice, he also talks of fidelity. He holds that if a person by his conduct raises the expectations of another and then fails to perform in order to meet those expectations then it is an unjust act. Now keeping in mind the conception of friendship that we discussed earlier, it can be argued that since friendship by its very nature comprises of loyalty, reliability, and trustworthiness, it should not be regarded as a threat to justice. Moreover since justice demands us to meet the expectations that others come to have from us as a result of our conduct, failing to meet the commitments of friendship would surely lead to injustice.

Henry Sidgwick has also discussed the concept of justice in 'The Method of Ethics'. He thinks that there is more to justice than conformity to law. Thus he raises the issue that where law observance does not matter, a just man is to be taken as an impartial man. He defines an impartial man as, "...one who seeks with equal care to satisfy all claims which he recognizes as valid and does not let himself be unduly influenced by personal preferences...if we neglect to give due consideration to any claim which we regard as reasonable, our action cannot be just in intention."⁵⁷ Lawrence A. Blum has borrowed the notion of 'claim' from Sidgwick's definition of justice to argue that since justice lies in satisfying all claims hence if I help my friend

⁵⁷ Henry Sidgwick, *The Method of Ethics*, (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1963), p 268.

instead of a stranger the act should not be regarded as an impartial or unjust act⁵⁸. This is so because between the two, it is my friend rather than the stranger who has a claim to my help.

In the more recent times, John Rawls, 'Theory of Justice', is the starting point from where most discussions on the concept of justice take off. According to Rawls, "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of system of thoughts."⁵⁹ For Rawls, justice can be understood as fairness or impartiality. He presents a hypothetical situation in which in the original position, there is a 'veil of ignorance'. He argues that in such a situation each person will prefer a state of affair, in which the interests of the least advantaged are taken care of in the best possible manner. Since nobody is sure of his position in the actual state of affair there can be no chance of partiality or favour to any particular position of one's subjective preference. Thus his conception of justice is concerned primarily with the distributive aspect of social policies and social relations and advocates fairness in this distribution.

For Rawls, inequality is not an evil in itself. He says, "Now by inequalities it is best to understand not *any* differences in the benefits and

⁵⁸ Lawrence A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980)

⁵⁹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), p 3.

burdens attached to them either directly or indirectly, such as prestige and wealth, or liability to taxation and compulsory services. Players in a game do not protest against there being different positions, such as batter, pitcher, catcher, and the like, nor do the citizens of a country object to there being the different offices of government such as president, senator, governor, judge, and so on, each with their special rights and duties. It is not differences of this kind that are normally thought of as inequalities, but differences in the resulting distribution established by a practice, or made possible by it, of the things men strive to attain or avoid.”⁶⁰ Here Rawls takes into consideration the ‘special rights and duties’ of people and does not take inequality as an intrinsic evil. The very fact that Rawls underlines the legitimacy of special rights and duties attached to different roles and positions in society, it can be recognised that his view of justice provides space for admitting the demands of friendship in terms of its special position in social and inter-personal relations.

Issues of conflict between Friendship and Justice: Equality and Impartiality

Principles of equality and impartiality do not represent a complete blindness to all the differences that we notice in terms of needs, capacities,

⁶⁰John Rawls, ‘Justice as fairness’, (*Philosophical Review*, vol. LXVII, 1958), p166

opportunities, skills, roles, interests and achievements. Any neglect of significant differences in these domains may turn out to be a source of gross injustice instead of promoting justice. That is why equity, i.e., giving everyone one's due, and not equality is seen as the overall social good. The demands of friendship can often be justified on the grounds of respect for significant differences and the principle of equity. It can be argued that my friend deserves my attention and concern more than a stranger because it is he who has a special value for me and not the stranger. Imagine that a stranger and a friend need my financial help or my time to solve their problem. I can help only one of them. If I do not help the stranger that stranger will be left to deal with the only one problem that he originally had. On the other hand, if I choose to help the stranger and leave my friend he'll have an additional problem of dealing with the emotional setback of being deserted by a friend.

The criterion of merit or being a deserving candidate can be justified in the favour of a friend, on the ground that, being a friend entitles one to be a more deserving candidate for our concern. I am a better judge of the merits of my friend. Let us take the situation above where one of my friends and a colleague who is mere acquaintance, both ask me to lend them a particular sum of money. Let us also take it that I have the resources to help only one of them. In such a situation I'm justified in helping a friend rather than a

stranger, for I'm sure that my friend is in genuine need of that money, also that the need for borrowing is not a result of some demerit in his character (he could be into gambling etc. or just extravagant) and that he is sincere in his promise to return the money in a given time. These requirements are not fulfilled in case of a stranger. It can be argued here that if each individual focuses his attention towards his obligation towards his friend, this shall lead to the promotion of the overall good. For, being a friend one is able to comprehend the requirements and needs of a person in a much better way than a stranger can.

Impartiality is another criterion offered for justice. Philosophers following the Kantian model of morality and the Utilitarians have both emphasized that impartiality is an important value on which any moral theory should be based. Thus it is taken that, for an action to be a just action, it should be carried out without any intention of benefiting some particular person against others. Friendship being a special relationship that one can share only with few people, 'acting out of friendship' is seen as being partial towards some and hence in conflict with justice. Diane Jeske has argued that this special care for one's friend does not amount to injustice. She says that, "All virtuous persons are equally deserving of my concern, but pragmatic

considerations force me to choose only a few as my friends.”⁶¹ She holds that though there might be reason for caring all virtuous people, one can focus one’s attention on only a few. She distinguishes between justificatory and explanatory reasons in this context.⁶² While my explanation for starting to care for a person may be the fact that he is a virtuous person my being partial towards my friend needs no more justification than the fact that he is my friend. The feeling of love that I have for a friend leaves me in a better position to care for him than a stranger.

She argues that friendship is not one of those goods that have to be distributed and once we become friends giving special attention to our friends comes naturally. In her words, “Intimacy simply is not possible between any and every two persons. So we cannot distribute friendship in the way that we can distribute food or health care. Those without friends are in an unfortunate position, but they have no special claim that someone be their friend.”⁶³ It could be said that partiality is inherent in the relation of friendship. Once I become friend with a particular individual, I come to have this obligation to care for him even if that does not help in the maximization of other socially

⁶¹ Diane Jeske, ('Friendship, Virtue and Impartiality', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, March 1997), p 59.

⁶² The distinction between explanatory reasons and justificatory reasons is generally taken as that the former refer to the explanatory reasons while the latter are given in order to provide good grounds for one’s action. For more on this distinction refer to : Satya P. Gautam, *Reasons for actions: A Praxiological Approach to Philosophy of Social Sciences*, (Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, 1983)

⁶³ Diane Jeske, ('Friendship, Virtue and Impartiality', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, March 1997), p 70.

valuable goods. Thus Jeske concludes that, "Friendship is a unique resource that demands a partiality grounded in the nature of the relationship itself..."⁶⁴

The demand for impartiality does not mean that we should not give any special attention to a particular individual but that when it comes to rules and policies that relate to the allocation of benefits, one should not be influenced by one's special relations such as friendship. Marcia Baron has made a distinction between two levels of impartiality. The first level is concerned with the particular acts while the second level is related to the stage where principles are chosen or affirmed. She holds that, "Impartiality at level 2 is consistent with partiality at level 1, as long as principles accepted at level 2 approve partiality at level 1."⁶⁵

Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach remarks that in the modern time, social philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Hegel and Rawls, have not given any consideration to the role of friendship in bonding and holding a society together. They are more concerned with security, freedom, commerce, law, and justice as the values required for a well-ordered society. She says, "Indeed, the argument that friendly feeling-or a shared interest in friendship could actually help bind citizens of the state together (and not simply lead to

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p72.

⁶⁵ Marcia Baron, ('Impartiality & Friendship', *Ethics*, Vol. 101, No. 4, July 1991), p 843.

partiality, bias, and factions) is more often explicitly rejected by modern thinkers."⁶⁶ She refers to Aristotle's idea that friendship is not opposed to but rather helps in the achievement of justice and asserts that this ancient notion needs to be revised in the present world.

Seeking compatibility between the two virtues- Friendship and Justice

Any attempt to find compatibility between the demands of justice and friendship must find its roots in the philosophy of Aristotle. Justice and friendship find place among his list of moral virtues that are necessary for achieving 'eudemonia' or the state of happiness. He not only accepts that justice is compatible with friendship but goes on to accept friendship as a requirement of a just society. Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach remarks, "The theme that in a just society citizens experience a form of friendship or *philia* for each other-they wish each other well for their own sake, do things for fellow citizens both individually and as a citizen body, and share in values, goals, and a sense of justice-is a constant theme running throughout Aristotle's ethical and political works. In fact, *philia* becomes a central criterion distinguishing just regimes from unjust ones..."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach, ('On Civic Friendship', *Ethics*, Vol. 107, No. 1, October 1996), p 98.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p 97.

Julia Annas contrasts Aristotle's conception of friendship from that of Plato's as described in the *Lysis*. She says that while Plato's primary concern seems to be personal friendships; Aristotle has included even its wider implications in the form of social or community relationships. Aristotle, keeping in mind the inequalities prevalent in the society of his times, distinguishes between equal and unequal friendships. These inequalities give rise to the question of justice. Annas quotes Aristotle to show a similarity in the aims of justice and friendship. "Friendship and justice seem ...to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons...the demands of justice also seem to increase with the intensity of the friendship" (1159bz5-26-1160a3-4). According to Julia Annas, "for Aristotle it is not just mean or deplorable but actually more unjust, to cheat a friend than a stranger. To our minds the parallel drawn out between the concepts makes Justice too personal and friendship too impersonal. Justice, for Aristotle, is not a matter of rights held independently of one's social relationships, and friendship not merely a matter of one's personal likings but to a great extent defined by one's social position as subject, son, demesman, etc"⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Julia Annas, 'Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism', (*Mind*, New Series Vol. 86, no. 344, October 1997), p 552. The numbers in bracket refer to lines from the text in Nicomachean Ethics.

While philosophers like Aristotle have tried to establish a relationship between the concepts of friendship and justice, there are others who claim that the two virtues are independent of each other. These philosophers, for example, Lawrence A. Blum, hold that there are two distinct areas in which the two kinds of duties: 'duties of justice' and 'duties of humanity' apply. The duties of humanity include benevolence, charity, and duties born out of our personal relationships. Within this field of humanity the rules of justice are not applicable. Lawrence A. Blum says, "...when acting from friendship it is neither required nor appropriate (normally) to look to impartial or impersonal considerations to guide our actions. Impartiality, fairness, and justice are personal virtues, but they are merely some virtues among others. They are not definitive of moral virtue altogether."⁶⁹ Blum has borrowed the notion of 'claim' from Sidgwick's definition of justice to argue that since justice lies in satisfying all claims hence if I help my friend instead of a stranger the act should not be regarded as an impartial or unjust act. This is so because between the two, it is my friend rather than the stranger who has a claim to my help.

Michael Sandel expresses a similar viewpoint as Blum's. Michael J. Meyer discusses Sandel's view that among friends there is no need of rights,

⁶⁹Lawrence A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980)

he holds that considerations of justice and claims of right tend to diminish the moral worth of friendship and other close-knit communities. Sandel compares this with the bonding within the family where relations are governed by the mutual affection that exists between the members of the family and the questions of right may never arise at all. This does not imply that the situation refers to the prevalent injustice but to the fact that the spirit of generosity rules over the need for justice. Sandel is of the view that justice is not the primary virtue of all societies and holds that, "an increase in justice does not necessarily imply an unqualified moral improvement".⁷⁰

Nancy Sherman studies the contrast between the Aristotelian and the Kantian notion of attachments. For Kant morality essentially consists in impartiality, and he gives a minimal space to personal affection in the field of morality. On the other hand, for Aristotle such attachments form the fundamental virtues. Sherman holds that for Aristotle, "...these claims, of wider generosity, justice or the like, do not have a privileged position in the good life. They do not always trump other virtues, nor are they constituted any less by passional dispositions." Moreover, these passional dispositions are

⁷⁰ Michael J. Meyer, ('Rights between Friends', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 89, No. 9, September 1992), Pp. 467-483

neither blind nor irrational forces, but rationally informed and guided intentional states."⁷¹

Michael Sandel thinks that the identity of a self cannot be established by isolating it from the various attachments that it has. He holds that these social relationships give a person his self-consciousness. He says, "Allegiances such as these are more than values I happen to have or aims I 'espouse at any given time.' They go beyond the obligations I voluntarily incur and the 'natural duties' I owe to human beings as such. They allow that to some I owe more than justice requires or even permits, not by reason of agreements I have made but instead in virtue of those more or less enduring attachments and commitments which taken together partly define the person I am"⁷² thus he too suggests that these attachments are above the requirements of justice.

Marilyn Friedman discusses the role of friendship from a feminist perspective. She distinguishes between the communities of origin that include family, nation and the likes and the community of choice that is shared by individuals who share some sort of commonality thus most resembling to friendship. She says, "A community of choice might be a community of

⁷¹ Nancy Sherman, ('Aristotle on Friendship and the shared Life', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 47, No. 4, June 1987), p 592-93.

⁷² Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p 179

people who share a common oppression. This is particularly critical in those instances in which the shared oppression is not concentrated within certain communities of place, as it might be, for example, in the case of ethnic minorities, but, rather, is focused on people who are distributed throughout social and ethnic groupings and who do not themselves constitute a traditional community of place. Women are a prime example of such a distributed group. Women's communities are seldom the original, non-voluntary, found communities of their members"⁷³ Such communities of choice help the members to rediscover their self-identity and fight against oppression. Thus leading to the struggle for justice through friendship. The feeling of solidarity that is shared among friends makes one more capable of ensuring that justice is achieved by him as well as his friends. The role of personal friendship is here argued in favour of justice.

But philosophers who have denied the compatibility of personal friendship with justice too accept the role of civic friendship in the achievement of justice. "...without the general goodwill and flexible 'give and take' that a civic friendship entails, citizens will be unable to accept in practice the *burdens of justice* required in any particular case."⁷⁴

⁷³ Marilyn Friedman, ('Feminism and modern Friendship: Dislocating community', *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 2, January 1989), p290.

⁷⁴ Sibyl A.Schwarzenbach, 'Democracy and Friendship', (*Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 36, no. 2 Summer2005), p236

Conclusion

Generally it is taken as an established fact that friendship holds an important place in human life. Yet the question remains whether it is morally permissible to assign a high value on a relationship that is by its very nature individualistic, exclusionary, personal and partial. In spite of the fact that the ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero have accepted friendship as a virtue, there are divergent views regarding the acceptability and significance of friendship for leading a moral life.

We made an attempt to discuss the ethical dimensions of friendship by addressing the familiar question whether caring for a friend includes the motive of self-love or is it a purely benevolent act. If one cares for a friend because the well being of his friends will result in one's own happiness, then this is surely an egoistic act. On the other hand, there exists the view that it is the essential nature of friendship to care for the friend 'for his own sake'. Egoistic accounts of friendship seem justified on the ground that friendship being a personal relationship shared with some particular individuals who are preferred over others; our real motivation behind seeking the well being of friends has to be our own happiness. The most plausible alternative in this context is to realize that when two people are friends the distinction between

mine and *your* do not remain that important. As friendship develops, the dialogical relationship enhances the sharing of mutual concerns in such a manner that the friend ceases to be seen as the other. The reciprocity of well-being of the two friends gets so closely connected that it becomes difficult to ascertain as to whose specific individual interest are the primary motivation. Our behaviour in context of our friendships is such that acts performed are neither exclusively for the sake of the nor exclusively for oneself, but for the sake of friendship. This is not to say that we always act 'for the sake of friendship', that is, to preserve the friendship. If one has to consciously work in order that the friendship survives or continues, remains, then it is not an example of true friendship. In the context of friendship, one acts out of a feeling of friendship and not for the sake of anything else.

The possibility of conflicts between friends cannot be denied. There are occasions when one is forced to make a difficult choice between an act that will benefit oneself and another that will bring out the friend's welfare. But the deliberations that lead to a decision in case where a friend is involved is very different from a case where the conflict involves a stranger. In many cases what appears to be an egoistic choice at that moment is taken to ensure the welfare of the friend in the long run.

In the context of situations where demands of justice come into conflict with the demands of friendship, philosophers often enter into a debate as to which of the two should be regarded as an overarching virtue. If it is taken that justice should prevail over friendship then friendship is reduced to mere acquaintance or company. We may spend time with some particular individual and often share our thoughts and feelings with them, but there is no commitment or expectation, explicit or tacit, to respond to the needs—emotional, material or otherwise, that such companions may have.

Commitments and expectations are central to the relation of friendship. By virtue of being friends, we come to have certain obligations towards those particular individuals. A failure to fulfil these demands goes against justice. The apparent conflict between the demands of friendship and the demands of justice is not always a real conflict. The need here is to realize the fact that even an agent whose life is committed to the cause of justice is in no way capable of removing all the injustices prevalent in this world. A more plausible solution in such an unjust world is to put all energies to remove or reduce the injustices that I can see in the lives of friends, for I am in a better position to render my help to the selected few who are my friends. By virtue of being a friend, my awareness and understanding of the miseries and injustice in the lives of my friends is more than the awareness I have about the miseries of the people I have no knowledge of. Therefore, it is through

solidarity among friends for the pursuit of justice that I may be in a position to live up to demands of friendship as well as justice.

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