

## **Question for the Portfolio Reading Set**

### ***Friendship***

**(Due on Friday, March. 16, 2012 by 4 p.m. in CC-1-1313)**

#### **Context:**

Emerson writes, “The higher the style we demand of friendship, of course the less easy to establish it with flesh and blood. We walk alone in the world. Friends, such as we desire, are dreams and fables. But a sublime hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere, in other regions of the universal power, souls are now acting, enduring, and daring, which can love us, and which we can love” ( 7).

#### **Question:**

Each author in this reading set defines the characteristics of friendship. In your essay, take a position on this issue: is Emerson’s claim—that a high standard of defining friendship (what Emerson speaks of as “the higher the style we demand of friendship”) makes it harder to achieve in concrete situations—applicable to the other readings in this set? Support your position by analyzing Emerson’s and at least three other authors’ definitions of friendship presented in the reading set.

# University of Massachusetts at Boston

## CEHD, CLA, CNHS, CPCS, and CSM

### Writing Proficiency Evaluation (WPE) Portfolio Reading Set

#### *Friendship*

**Portfolio due on Friday, 16 March 2012 by 4:00PM at CC-1-113**

#### **Readings:**

1. Aristotle. "Friendship." *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII. Trans. W. D. Ross. Online Text: <http://philosophy.eserver.org/aristotle/nicomachean-ethics.txt>.
1. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Friendship." *Essays* 1841. Online text: RWE.org—The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. (Established: December 8, 1997-XML redesign, February 5, 2005). Description: RWE.org presents Ralph Waldo Emerson's Works, in XML - with extensive Search-ability, Essays, Books, Lectures, Addresses, Commentary, PalmPilot Readable Docs, Poems and Uncollected Prose. New York, NY: Jim Manley [admin@rwe.org], Web Designer/Author. Retrieved 9/15/06, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.rwe.org>
2. Meilaender, Gilbert. "Friendship and Fidelity." *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*, Chapter 3. Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 1981. 53-67.
3. Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames. "Confucian Friendship." *The Changing Face of Friendship*. Ed. Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 1994. 77-94.
4. Parekh, Bhikhu. "An Indian View of Friendship." *The Changing Face of Friendship*. Ed. Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 1994. 95-113.

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#### **Notes:**

It is essential that you include in your essay specific references to the articles in the reading set, and that you attribute any material that you summarize, quote, or paraphrase to its source. Base your essay on the information contained in the set of readings, not on your own experience, on outside readings, or on courses you have taken. **Your portfolio must contain an essay that is at least five full pages** (double spaced in 10 or 12 point type) that answers the question above, **at least 15 pages of supporting papers** each one should be attached to a completed Certification Form and a completed Portfolio Submission Form.

The exception to the 15-page supporting-paper requirement **only applies to a new transfer** student, who will have completed 75 or more credits at the end of his/her first semester at UMB. If, and only if you are a transfer student who has not yet completed your second semester, then you may submit a mid-semester portfolio (March or October) that has either two or three supporting papers totaling 10 full pages.

Additionally, you are still required to submit the new essay on the reading set. You must place all of the required items in an envelope that has your name and UMS number on it, and submit it to the Writing Proficiency Office (CC 1/1313) **by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 16, 2012.**

**Three Kinds of Friendship**, from *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8,  
by Aristotle

1. AFTER what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods; even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its most laudable form towards friends? Or how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends? The greater it is, the more exposed it is to risk. And in poverty and in other misfortunes men think friends are the only refuge. It helps the young, too, to keep from error; it aids older people by ministering to their needs and supplementing the activities that are failing from weakness; those in the prime of life it stimulates to noble actions—"two going together"—for with friends men are more able both to think and to act. Again, parent seems by nature to feel it for offspring and offspring for parent, not only among men but among birds and among most animals; it is felt mutually by members of the same race, and especially by men, whence we praise lovers of their fellow men. We may see even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other. Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.

But it is not only necessary but also noble; for we praise those who love their friends, and it is thought to be a fine thing to have many friends; and again we think it is the same people that are good men and are friends.

Not a few things about friendship are matters of debate. Some define it as a kind of likeness and say like people are friends, whence come the sayings 'like to like', 'birds of a feather flock together', and so on; others on the contrary say 'two of a trade never agree.' On this very question they inquire more deeply and in a more scientific fashion, Euripides saying that 'parched earth loves the rain, and stately heaven when filled with rain loves to fall to earth', and Heraclitus that 'it is what opposes that helps' and 'from different tones comes the fairest tune' and 'all things are produced through strife'; while Empedocles, as well as others, expresses the opposite view that like aims at like. The scientific problems we may leave alone (for they do not belong to the present inquiry); let us examine those which are human and involve character and feeling, e.g. whether friendship can arise between any two people or people cannot be friends if they are wicked, and whether there is one species of friendship or more than one. Those who think there is only one because it admits of degrees have relied on an inadequate indication; for even things different in species admit of degree. [...]

2. The kinds of friendship may perhaps be cleared up if we first come to know the object of love. For not everything seems to be loved but only the lovable, and this is good, pleasant, or useful; but it would seem to be that by which some good or pleasure is produced that is useful, so that it is the good and the pleasant that are lovable as ends. Do men love, then, the good, or what is good for them? These sometimes clash. So too with regard to the pleasant. Now it is thought that each loves what is good for himself, and that the good is without qualification lovable, and what is good for each man is lovable for him; but each man loves not what is good for him but what seems good. This however will make no difference; we shall just have to say that this is that which seems lovable. Now there are three grounds on which people love; of the love of lifeless objects we do not use the word 'friendship'; for it is not mutual love, nor is there a wishing of good to the other (for it would surely be ridiculous to wish wine well; if one wishes anything for it, it is that it may keep, so that one may have it oneself); but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake. But to those who thus wish good we ascribe only goodwill, if the wish is not reciprocated; goodwill when it is reciprocal being friendship. Or must we add 'when it is recognized'? For many people have goodwill to those whom they have not seen but judge to be good or useful; and one of these might return this feeling. These people seem to bear goodwill to each other; but how could one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings? To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons.

3. Now these reasons differ from each other in kind; so therefore, do the corresponding forms of love and friendship. There are therefore three kinds of friendship, equal in number to the things that are lovable; for with respect to each there is a mutual and recognized love, and those who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another. Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for *themselves* and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to *themselves* and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. Such friendships, then, are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him.

Now the useful is not permanent but is always changing. Thus when the motive of the friendship is done away, the friendship is dissolved, inasmuch as it existed only for the ends in question. This kind of friendship seems to exist chiefly between old people (for at that age people pursue not the pleasant but the useful) and, of those who are in their prime or young, between those who pursue utility. And such people do not live much with each other either; for sometimes they do not even find each other pleasant; therefore they do not need such companionship unless they are useful to each other; for they are pleasant to each other only in so far as they rouse in each other hopes of something good to come. Among such friendships people also class the friendship of host and guest. On the other hand the friendship of young people seems to aim at pleasure; for they live under the guidance of emotion, and pursue above all what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them; but with increasing age their pleasures become different. This is why they quickly become friends and quickly cease to be so; their friendship changes with the object that is found pleasant, and such pleasure alters quickly. Young people are amorous too; for the greater part of the friendship of love depends on emotion and aims at pleasure; this is why they fall in love and quickly fall out of love, changing often within a single day. But these people do wish to spend their days and lives together; for it is thus that they attain the purpose of their friendship.

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in excellence; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and excellence is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good *are* the same or like. And such a friendship is as might be expected lasting since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have. For all friendship is for the sake of good or of pleasure—good or pleasure either in the abstract or such as will be enjoyed by him who has the friendly feeling—and is based on a certain resemblance; and to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves; for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends, and that which is good without qualification is also without qualification pleasant, and these are the most lovable qualities. Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men.

But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare. Further, such friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says men cannot know each other till they have ‘eaten salt together’; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.

4. This kind of friendship, then, is complete both in respect of duration and in all other respects, and in it each gets from each in all respects the same as, or something like what, he gives; which is what ought to happen between friends. Friendship for the sake of pleasure bears a resemblance to this kind; for good people too are pleasant to each other. So too does friendship for the sake of utility; for the good are also useful to each other.

Among men of these sorts too, friendships are most permanent when the friends get the same thing from each other (e.g. pleasure), and not only that but also from the same source, as happens between ready-witted people, not as happens between lover and beloved. For these do not take pleasure in the same things, but the one in seeing the beloved and the other in receiving attentions from his lover; and when the bloom of youth is passing the friendship sometimes passes too (for the one finds no pleasure in the sight of the other, and the other gets no attentions from the first); but many lovers on the other hand are constant, if familiarity has led them to love each other's characters, these being alike. But those who exchange not pleasure but utility in their love are both less truly friends and less constant. Those who are friends for the sake of utility part when the advantage is at an end; for they were lovers not of each other but of profit.

For the sake of pleasure or utility, then, even bad men may be friends of each other, or good men of bad, or one who is neither good nor bad may be a friend to any sort of person, but for their own sake clearly only good men can be friends; for bad men do not delight in each other unless some advantage come of the relation.

The friendship of the good too alone is proof against slander; for it is not easy to trust any one's talk about a man who has long been tested by oneself; and it is among good men that trust and the feeling that he would never wrong me and all the other things that are demanded in true friendship are found. In the other kinds of friendship, however, there is nothing to prevent these evils arising.

For men apply the name of friends even to those whose motive is utility, in which sense states are said to be friendly (for the alliances of states seem to aim at advantage), and to those who love each other for the sake of pleasure, in which sense children are called friends. Therefore we too ought perhaps to call such people friends, and say that there are several kinds of friendship -firstly and in the proper sense that of good men *qua* good, and by similarity the other kinds; for it is in virtue of something good and something similar that they are friends, since even the pleasant is good for the lovers of pleasure. But these two kinds of friendship are not often united, nor do the same people become friends for the sake of utility and of pleasure; for things that are only incidentally connected are not often coupled together.

Friendship being divided into these kinds; bad men will be friends for the sake of pleasure or of utility, being in this respect like each other, but good men will be friends for their own sake, i.e. in virtue of their goodness. These, then, are friends without qualification; the others are friends incidentally and through a resemblance to these.

5. [...] The truest friendship, then, is that of the good, as we have frequently said; for that which is without qualification good or pleasant seems to be lovable and desirable, and for each person that which is good or pleasant to him; and the good man is lovable and desirable to the good man for both these reasons. Now it looks as if love were a feeling, friendship a state of character; for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state of character; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of a state of character. And in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend. Each, then, both loves what is good for himself, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness; for friendship is said to be equality, and both of these are found most in the friendship of the good.

## Essay 6 from, *Essays* 1841: "Friendship," by Ralph Waldo Emerson

We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken. Maugre all the selfishness that chills like east winds the world, the whole human family is bathed with an element of love like a fine ether. How many persons we meet in houses, whom we scarcely speak to, whom yet we honor, and who honor us! How many we see in the street, or sit with in church, whom, though silently, we warmly rejoice to be with! Read the language of these wandering eye-beams. The heart knoweth.

The effect of the indulgence of this human affection is a certain cordial exhilaration. In poetry, and in common speech, the emotions of benevolence and complacency which are felt towards others are likened to the material effects of fire; so swift, or much more swift, more active, more cheering, are these fine inward irradiations. From the highest degree of passionate love, to the lowest degree of good-will, they make the sweetness of life.

Our intellectual and active powers increase with our affection. The scholar sits down to write, and all his years of meditation do not furnish him with one good thought or happy expression; but it is necessary to write a letter to a friend, —and, forthwith, troops of gentle thoughts invest themselves, on every hand, with chosen words. See, in any house where virtue and self-respect abide, the palpitation which the approach of a stranger causes. A commended stranger is expected and announced, and an uneasiness betwixt pleasure and pain invades all the hearts of a household. His arrival almost brings fear to the good hearts that would welcome him. The house is dusted, all things fly into their places, the old coat is exchanged for the new, and they must get up a dinner if they can. Of a commended stranger, only the good report is told by others, only the good and new is heard by us. He stands to us for humanity. He is what we wish. Having imagined and invested him, we ask how we should stand related in conversation and action with such a man, and are uneasy with fear. The same idea exalts conversation with him. We talk better than we are wont. We have the nimblest fancy, a richer memory, and our dumb devil has taken leave for the time. For long hours we can continue a series of sincere, graceful, rich communications, drawn from the oldest, secretest experience, so that they who sit by, of our own kinsfolk and acquaintance, shall feel a lively surprise at our unusual powers. But as soon as the stranger begins to intrude his partialities, his definitions, his defects, into the conversation, it is all over. He has heard the first, the last and best he will ever hear from us. He is no stranger now. Vulgarity, ignorance, misapprehension are old acquaintances. Now, when he comes, he may get the order, the dress, and the dinner, —but the throbbing of the heart, and the communications of the soul, no more.

What is so pleasant as these jets of affection which make a young world for me again? What so delicious as a just and firm encounter of two, in a thought, in a feeling? How beautiful, on their approach to this beating heart, the steps and forms of the gifted and the true! The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metamorphosed; there is no winter, and no night; all tragedies, all ennui, vanish, — all duties even; nothing fills the proceeding eternity but the forms all radiant of beloved persons. Let the soul be assured that somewhere in the universe it should rejoin its friend, and it would be content and cheerful alone for a thousand years.

I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new. Shall I not call God the Beautiful, who daily showeth himself so to me in his gifts? I chide society, I embrace solitude, and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate. Who hears me, who understands me, becomes mine, — a possession for all time. Nor is nature so poor but she gives me this joy several times, and thus we weave social threads of our own, a new web of relations; and, as many thoughts in succession substantiate themselves, we shall by and by stand in a new world of our own creation, and no longer strangers and pilgrims in a traditionary globe. My friends have come to me unsought. The great God gave them to me. By oldest right, by the divine affinity of virtue with itself, I find them, or rather not I, but the Deity in me and in them derides and cancels the thick walls of individual character, relation, age, sex, circumstance, at which he usually connives, and now makes many one. High thanks I owe you, excellent lovers, who carry out the world for me to new and noble depths, and enlarge the meaning of all my thoughts. These are new poetry of the first Bard, — poetry without stop, — hymn, ode, and epic, poetry still flowing, Apollo and the Muses chanting still. Will these, too, separate themselves from me again, or some of them? I know not, but I fear it not; for my relation to



them is so pure, that we hold by simple affinity, and the Genius of my life being thus social, the same affinity will exert its energy on whomsoever is as noble as these men and women, wherever I may be.

I confess to an extreme tenderness of nature on this point. It is almost dangerous to me to “crush the sweet poison of misused wine” of the affections. A new person is to me a great event, and hinders me from sleep. I have often had fine fancies about persons which have given me delicious hours; but the joy ends in the day; it yields no fruit. Thought is not born of it; my action is very little modified. I must feel pride in my friend’s accomplishments as if they were mine, — and a property in his virtues. I feel as warmly when he is praised, as the lover when he hears applause of his engaged maiden. We over-estimate the conscience of our friend. His goodness seems better than our goodness, his nature finer, his temptations less. Every thing that is his, — his name, his form, his dress, books, and instruments, — fancy enhances. Our own thought sounds new and larger from his mouth.

Yet the systole and diastole of the heart are not without their analogy in the ebb and flow of love. Friendship, like the immortality of the soul, is too good to be believed. The lover, beholding his maiden, half knows that she is not verily that which he worships; and in the golden hour of friendship, we are surprised with shades of suspicion and unbelief. We doubt that we bestow on our hero the virtues in which he shines, and afterwards worship the form to which we have ascribed this divine inhabitation. In strictness, the soul does not respect men as it respects itself. In strict science all persons underlie the same condition of an infinite remoteness. Shall we fear to cool our love by mining for the metaphysical foundation of this Elysian temple? Shall I not be as real as the things I see? If I am, I shall not fear to know them for what they are. Their essence is not less beautiful than their appearance, though it needs finer organs for its apprehension. The root of the plant is not unsightly to science, though for chaplets and festoons we cut the stem short. And I must hazard the production of the bald fact amidst these pleasing reveries, though it should prove an Egyptian skull at our banquet. A man who stands united with his thought conceives magnificently of himself. He is conscious of a universal success, even though bought by uniform particular failures. No advantages, no powers, no gold or force, can be any match for him. I cannot choose but rely on my own poverty more than on your wealth. I cannot make your consciousness tantamount to mine. Only the star dazzles; the planet has a faint, moon-like ray. I hear what you say of the admirable parts and tried temper of the party you praise, but I see well that for all his purple cloaks I shall not like him, unless he is at last a poor Greek like me. I cannot deny it, O friend, that the vast shadow of the Phenomenal includes thee also in its pied and painted immensity, — thee, also, compared with whom all else is shadow. Thou art not Being, as Truth is, as Justice is, — thou art not my soul, but a picture and effigy of that. Thou hast come to me lately, and already thou art seizing thy hat and cloak. Is it not that the soul puts forth friends as the tree puts forth leaves, and presently, by the germination of new buds, extrudes the old leaf? The law of nature is alternation for evermore. Each electrical state superinduces the opposite. The soul environs itself with friends, that it may enter into a grander self-acquaintance or solitude; and it goes alone for a season, that it may exalt its conversation or society. This method betrays itself along the whole history of our personal relations. The instinct of affection revives the hope of union with our mates, and the returning sense of insulation recalls us from the chase. Thus every man passes his life in the search after friendship [....]

The attractions of this subject are not to be resisted, and I leave, for the time, all account of subordinate social benefit, to speak of that select and sacred relation which is a kind of absolute, and which even leaves the language of love suspicious and common, so much is this purer, and nothing is so much divine.

I do not wish to treat friendships daintily, but with roughest courage. When they are real, they are not glass threads or frostwork, but the solidest thing we know. For now, after so many ages of experience, what do we know of nature, or of ourselves? Not one step has man taken toward the solution of the problem of his destiny. In one condemnation of folly stand the whole universe of men. But the sweet sincerity of joy and peace, which I draw from this alliance with my brother’s soul, is the nut itself, whereof all nature and all thought is but the husk and shell. [...]

There are two elements that go to the composition of friendship, each so sovereign that I can detect no superiority in either, no reason why either should be first named. One is Truth. A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real and equal, that I may drop even those undermost garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought, which men never put off, and may deal with him with the simplicity and wholeness with which one chemical atom meets another. Sincerity

is the luxury allowed, like diadems and authority, only to the highest rank, *that* being permitted to speak truth, as having none above it to court or conform unto. Every man alone is sincere. At the entrance of a second person, hypocrisy begins. We parry and fend the approach of our fellow-man by compliments, by gossip, by amusements, by affairs. We cover up our thought from him under a hundred folds. I knew a man, who, under a certain religious frenzy, cast off this drapery, and, omitting all compliment and commonplace, spoke to the conscience of every person he encountered, and that with great insight and beauty. At first he was resisted, and all men agreed he was mad. But persisting, as indeed he could not help doing, for some time in this course, he attained to the advantage of bringing every man of his acquaintance into true relations with him. No man would think of speaking falsely with him, or of putting him off with any chat of markets or reading-rooms. But every man was constrained by so much sincerity to the like plain-dealing, and what love of nature, what poetry, what symbol of truth he had, he did certainly show him. But to most of us society shows not its face and eye, but its side and its back. To stand in true relations with men in a false age is worth a fit of insanity, is it not? We can seldom go erect. Almost every man we meet requires some civility, — requires to be humored; he has some fame, some talent, some whim of religion or philanthropy in his head that is not to be questioned, and which spoils all conversation with him. But a friend is a sane man who exercises not my ingenuity, but me. My friend gives me entertainment without requiring any stipulation on my part. A friend, therefore, is a sort of paradox in nature. I who alone am, I who see nothing in nature whose existence I can affirm with equal evidence to my own, behold now the semblance of my being, in all its height, variety, and curiosity, reiterated in a foreign form; so that a friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.

The other element of friendship is tenderness. We are holden to men by every sort of tie, by blood, by pride, by fear, by hope, by lucre, by lust, by hate, by admiration, by every circumstance and badge and trifle, but we can scarce believe that so much character can subsist in another as to draw us by love. Can another be so blessed, and we so pure, that we can offer him tenderness? When a man becomes dear to me, I have touched the goal of fortune. I find very little written directly to the heart of this matter in books. And yet I have one text which I cannot choose but remember. My author says, — “I offer myself faintly and bluntly to those whose I effectually am, and tender myself least to him to whom I am the most devoted.” I wish that friendship should have feet, as well as eyes and eloquence. It must plant itself on the ground, before it vaults over the moon. I wish it to be a little of a citizen, before it is quite a cherub. We chide the citizen because he makes love a commodity. It is an exchange of gifts, of useful loans; it is good neighbourhood; it watches with the sick; it holds the pall at the funeral; and quite loses sight of the delicacies and nobility of the relation. But though we cannot find the god under this disguise of a sutler, yet, on the other hand, we cannot forgive the poet if he spins his thread too fine, and does not substantiate his romance by the municipal virtues of justice, punctuality, fidelity, and pity. I hate the prostitution of the name of friendship to signify modish and worldly alliances. I much prefer the company of ploughboys and tin-peddlers, to the silken and perfumed amity which celebrates its days of encounter by a frivolous display, by rides in a curricule, and dinners at the best taverns. The end of friendship is a commerce the most strict and homely that can be joined; more strict than any of which we have experience. It is for aid and comfort through all the relations and passages of life and death. It is fit for serene days, and graceful gifts, and country rambles, but also for rough roads and hard fare, shipwreck, poverty, and persecution. It keeps company with the sallies of the wit and the trances of religion. We are to dignify to each other the daily needs and offices of man’s life, and embellish it by courage, wisdom, and unity. It should never fall into something usual and settled, but should be alert and inventive, and add rhyme and reason to what was drudgery.

Friendship may be said to require natures so rare and costly, each so well tempered and so happily adapted, and withal so circumstanced, (for even in that particular, a poet says, love demands that the parties be altogether paired,) that its satisfaction can very seldom be assured. It cannot subsist in its perfection, say some of those who are learned in this warm lore of the heart, betwixt more than two. I am not quite so strict in my terms, perhaps because I have never known so high a fellowship as others. I please my imagination more with a circle of godlike men and women variously related to each other, and between whom subsists a lofty intelligence. But I find this law of—one to one—peremptory for conversation, which is the practice and consummation of friendship. Do not mix waters too much. The best mix as ill as good and bad. You shall have very useful and cheering discourse at several times with two several men, but let all three of you come together, and you shall not have one new and hearty word. Two may talk and one may hear, but three cannot take part in a conversation of the most sincere and searching sort. In good company there is never such discourse between two, across the table, as takes place when



you leave them alone. In good company, the individuals merge their egotism into a social soul exactly co-extensive with the several consciousnesses there present. No partialities of friend to friend, no fondnesses of brother to sister, of wife to husband, are there pertinent, but quite otherwise. Only he may then speak who can sail on the common thought of the party, and not poorly limited to his own. Now this convention, which good sense demands, destroys the high freedom of great conversation, which requires an absolute running of two souls into one.

No two men but, being left alone with each other, enter into simpler relations. Yet it is affinity that determines *which* two shall converse. Unrelated men give little joy to each other; will never suspect the latent powers of each. We talk sometimes of a great talent for conversation, as if it were a permanent property in some individuals. Conversation is an evanescent relation, — no more. A man is reputed to have thought and eloquence; he cannot, for all that, say a word to his cousin or his uncle. They accuse his silence with as much reason as they would blame the insignificance of a dial in the shade. In the sun it will mark the hour. Among those who enjoy his thought, he will regain his tongue.

Friendship requires that rare mean betwixt likeness and unlikeness, that piques each with the presence of power and of consent in the other party. Let me be alone to the end of the world, rather than that my friend should overstep, by a word or a look, his real sympathy. I am equally balked by antagonism and by compliance. Let him not cease an instant to be himself. The only joy I have in his being mine, is that the —not mine— is —mine—. I hate, where I looked for a manly furtherance, or at least a manly resistance, to find a mush of concession. Better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo. The condition which high friendship demands is ability to do without it. That high office requires great and sublime parts. There must be very two, before there can be very one. Let it be an alliance of two large, formidable natures, mutually beheld, mutually feared, before yet they recognize the deep identity which beneath these disparities unites them. [...]

Respect so far the holy laws of this fellowship as not to prejudice its perfect flower by your impatience for its opening. We must be our own before we can be another's. There is at least this satisfaction in crime, according to the Latin proverb; — you can speak to your accomplice on even terms. “*Crimen quos inquinat, aequat*”. To those whom we admire and love, at first we cannot. Yet the least defect of self-possession vitiates, in my judgment, the entire relation. There can never be deep peace between two spirits, never mutual respect, until, in their dialogue, each stands for the whole world. [...]

What is so great as friendship, let us carry with what grandeur of spirit we can. Let us be silent, — so we may hear the whisper of the gods. Let us not interfere. Who set you to cast about what you should say to the select souls, or how to say any thing to such? No matter how ingenious, no matter how graceful and bland. There are innumerable degrees of folly and wisdom, and for you to say aught is to be frivolous. Wait, and thy heart shall speak. Wait until the necessary and everlasting overpowers you, until day and night avail themselves of your lips. The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one. You shall not come nearer a man by getting into his house. If unlike, his soul only flees the faster from you, and you shall never catch a true glance of his eye. We see the noble afar off, and they repel us; why should we intrude? Late, — very late, — we perceive that no arrangements, no introductions, no consuetudes or habits of society, would be of any avail to establish us in such relations with them as we desire, —but solely the uprise of nature in us to the same degree it is in them; then shall we meet as water with water; and if we should not meet them then, we shall not want them, for we are already they. In the last analysis, love is only the reflection of a man's own worthiness from other men. Men have sometimes exchanged names with their friends, as if they would signify that in their friend each loved his own soul.

The higher the style we demand of friendship, of course the less easy to establish it with flesh and blood. We walk alone in the world. Friends, such as we desire, are dreams and fables. But a sublime hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere, in other regions of the universal power, souls are now acting, enduring, and daring, which can love us, and which we can love. We may congratulate ourselves that the period of nonage, of follies, of blunders, and of shame, is passed in solitude, and when we are finished men, we shall grasp heroic hands in heroic hands. Only be admonished by what you already see, not to strike leagues of friendship with cheap persons, where no friendship can be. Our impatience betrays us into rash and foolish alliances which no God attends. By persisting in your path, though you forfeit the little you gain the great. You demonstrate yourself, so as to put yourself out of the reach of false relations, and you draw to you the first-born of the world, — those rare pilgrims whereof only one or two wander in nature at once, and before whom the vulgar great show as spectres and shadows merely.

It is foolish to be afraid of making our ties too spiritual, as if so we could lose any genuine love. Whatever correction of our popular views we make from insight, nature will be sure to bear us out in, and though it seem to rob us of some joy, will repay us with a greater. Let us feel, if we will, the absolute insulation of man. We are sure that we have all in us. We go to Europe, or we pursue persons, or we read books, in the instinctive faith that these will call it out and reveal us to ourselves. Beggars all. The persons are such as we; the Europe an old faded garment of dead persons; the books their ghosts. Let us drop this idolatry. Let us give over this mendicancy. Let us even bid our dearest friends farewell, and defy them, saying, 'Who are you? Unhand me: I will be dependent no more.' Ah! seest thou not, O brother, that thus we part only to meet again on a higher platform, and only be more each other's, because we are more our own? A friend is Janus-faced: he looks to the past and the future. He is the child of all my foregoing hours, the prophet of those to come, and the harbinger of a greater friend.

I do then with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them where I can find them, but I seldom use them. We must have society on our own terms, and admit or exclude it on the slightest cause. I cannot afford to speak much with my friend. If he is great, he makes me so great that I cannot descend to converse. In the great days, presentiments hover before me in the firmament. I ought then to dedicate myself to them. I go in that I may seize them, I go out that I may seize them. I fear only that I may lose them receding into the sky in which now they are only a patch of brighter light. Then, though I prize my friends, I cannot afford to talk with them and study their visions, lest I lose my own. It would indeed give me a certain household joy to quit this lofty seeking, this spiritual astronomy, or search of stars, and come down to warm sympathies with you; but then I know well I shall mourn always the vanishing of my mighty gods. It is true, next week I shall have languid moods, when I can well afford to occupy myself with foreign objects; then I shall regret the lost literature of your mind, and wish you were by my side again. But if you come, perhaps you will fill my mind only with new visions, not with yourself but with your lustres, and I shall not be able any more than now to converse with you. So I will owe to my friends this evanescent intercourse. I will receive from them, not what they have, but what they are. They shall give me that which properly they cannot give, but which emanates from them. But they shall not hold me by any relations less subtile and pure. We will meet as though we met not, and part as though we parted not. [...]

### **“Friendship and Fidelity,” by Gilbert Meilaender**

Does the dance cease because one dancer has gone away? In a certain sense. But if the other still remains standing in the posture which expresses a turning towards the one who is not seen, and if you know nothing about the past, then you will say, “Now the dance will begin just as soon as the other comes, the one who is expected.”

Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*

Friendship is not love in general; rather it is a deep attachment to and preference for another person because of the sort of person he or she is. Yet, because this is the case, it seems necessary to say that if one of the persons changes, the relationship must change and friendship may die. If friendship is preferential love, it must cease when the characteristics which gave rise to such preference are no longer present. And if the affection of friendship fails and fades in either party, then one can only admit that the reciprocal and mutually shared good-will which friendship involves is gone. Friendship, in order to be friendship — that is, in order to be a preferential and reciprocal love — must be subject to change.

Not so with Christian love. It is determined not by the characteristics of the loved one nor by any anticipated return but solely by its own self-giving character. “How can I give you up, O Ephraim?” Yahweh cries out through his prophet (Hosea 11:9). And the Evangelist depicts the standard for *agape*<sup>1</sup> when he writes of Jesus that “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). The God who in nature has faithfully made his sun to rise on evil and good and sent his rain on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45) is thereby claimed to have proven himself just as faithful within history. It is not surprising that such love should

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<sup>1</sup> *Agape*, is a Greek word; as articulated by Christian evangelists, is selfless, non-judgmental love in which the act of loving is the source of its own satisfaction.

make neither preference nor reciprocity central. *Agape*, in order to be *agape* — that is, in order to be a faithful love — must, it seems, be non-preferential and unconcerned with reciprocity.

Perhaps, therefore, we ought simply to face the harsh truth to which this brief analysis gives rise: friendship and fidelity are incompatible. We can purchase permanence in love only by sacrificing the delights of preference and reciprocity, and we can enjoy friendship only by sacrificing the assurance of permanence. And yet, it is not clear that either of these is precisely what we desire. “A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). That is what we want: faithful friendship. The hard question is whether we can have it.

1. It should be no surprise that certain friendships cease. Those ties, for example, which were based solely on the usefulness of the friends to each other are not likely to survive a change in circumstances which makes obsolete the mutually advantageous relationship which existed. Plutarch put the point well:

In the house of rich men and rulers, the people see a noisy throng of visitors offering their greetings and shaking hands and playing the part of armed retainers, and they think that those who have so many friends must be happy. Yet they can see a far greater number of flies in those persons’ kitchens. But the flies do not stay on after the good food is gone, nor the retainers after their patron’s usefulness is gone.

And even in the case of character-friendships, if these are formed before young people reach some degree of maturity, we are neither surprised nor even particularly dismayed to discover that those who were once close friends have grown apart and fallen out of touch. Where character is not yet relatively formed, character-friendships must necessarily be unstable.

Far more tragic, yet also understandable, are friendships which falter when the friends find themselves in unalterable disagreement on some good greater even than the friendship itself. If . . . the exclusiveness of friendship is meant to lead on to a more all-embracing form of community, we have to reckon with the possibility that a more universal good may, at any time, demand our loyalty in an overriding way. Thus Aristotle, referring to his friendship for the author of the Theory of Ideas, which he is criticizing, says that truth must be valued more highly even than friendship — a sentiment which would surely have been understood by the author of that theory who himself had written that “we must not honor a man above truth.”

Indeed, in Christian terms one must always presume at least one such qualification to be written into friendship: namely, that loyalty to the friend could not override faithfulness to God, if these should seem to conflict. [...] Dorothy Sayers explores such a conflict in *Unnatural Death*, one of her Lord Peter Wimsey stories. Mary Whittaker, a murderess, is using Vera Findlater to provide her with an alibi. Vera is an extremely dedicated and loyal friend (who mistakenly believes that the same is true of Mary) and has permitted ties of personal loyalty to lead her to lie on Mary’s behalf. In a conversation with Miss Climpson, who seems an innocuous spinster but is really investigating for Lord Peter, the theological issue is raised.

“But a great friendship does make demands,” cried Miss Findlater eagerly. “It’s got to be just everything to one. It’s wonderful the way it seems to color all one’s thoughts. Instead of being centered in oneself, one’s centered in the other person. That’s what Christian love means — one’s ready to die for the other person.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Miss Climpson. “I once heard a sermon about that from a most *splendid* priest — and he said that that kind of love might become *idolatry* if one wasn’t very careful. He said that Milton’s remark about Eve — you know, ‘he for God only, she for God in him’ — was not congruous with Catholic doctrine. One must get the *proportions* right, and it was *out of proportion* to see everything through the eyes of another fellow-creature.”

To prefer the friend above God, who gives the friend, would be an inordinate love — one in which, as Miss Climpson’s splendid priest put it, the proportions were not right. And, however tragic the choice might be on

certain occasions, one must be willing to say to the friend what the Cavalier poet said, [...] “I could not love thee dear, loved I not honor more.”

Conflicts such as these are not the chief obstacle to faithful friendship. The barrier is something far less heroic sounding, far more mundane. “The most fatal disease of friendship,” Dr. Johnson wrote, “is gradual decay.” Perhaps time heals all wounds, but only by teaching forgetfulness of the wounds which time itself inflicts. We are temporal beings, constantly changing. And a love—like friendship, which depends so greatly on shared interests and enjoyments, is easily weakened or destroyed by altered circumstances. Any change in our circumstances, our vocation, our education, our wealth will slowly have its effect on our friendships. New enjoyments and interests crowd out old ones — crowding out also thereby the friendships built on those old enjoyments and interests. [...] S]ober analysis of the requirements of friendship and the requirements of fidelity suggests that faithful friendship is likely to be very rare in human experience. Friendship involves the delights and enjoyments which preference and reciprocity make possible. Fidelity requires a steadfastness of purpose which perseveres even when none of those enjoyments is possible.

It remains open to us to respond to this pessimistic forecast in different ways. Aristotle, for example, accepts with sober realism the fact that friendships may be dissolved. He discusses the possibility that the character of one friend may change for the worse or that one person may remain what he was while the other becomes better and a far superior person. If the character of a friend becomes evil, he suggests, the friendship should not be broken off at once, but if the change seems unlikely to be reversed, “No one would regard a person who breaks off such a friendship as acting strangely. . . . His friend has changed, and since he is unable to save him, he severs his connections with him.” Likewise, if one becomes far superior to the other and “the distance between them becomes great,” it is impossible that friendship should be sustained. Aristotle does not regard this as likely to happen in friendships among mature adults, since he regards character as habitual and unlikely to change, but he recognizes the possibility in quite matter-of-fact fashion. Even such a realistic view cannot deny, however, that the commitments which friendship involves continue to have claims on us.

Should, then, a former friend be treated just as if he had never been a friend at all? No; we should remember our past familiarity with him, and just as we feel more obliged to do favors for friends than for strangers, we must show some consideration to him for old friendship’s sake, provided that it was not excessive wickedness on his part that broke the friendship. [...]

2. If friendship’s duration is so uncertain, one may well ask whether there is any way to protect friendship against dissolution. And there is one answer, often given by those who have written on friendship, which deserves to be taken seriously if only because it has been given so frequently: test the prospective friend in advance of offering friendship. Emerson — whose essay on friendship is considerably overrated and whose “the only way to have a friend is to be one” sounds quite different when read in context — states the typical view concisely and eloquently: “Let us buy our entrance to this guild by a long probation.”

Cicero, living in an age when friendships were of political and not merely private importance, develops the theme of testing at great length. It is wise, he suggests, to “exercise such care in forming friendships that we should never begin to love anyone whom we might sometime hate.” [...]

One feels instinctively that there is something unsatisfactory — perhaps even repugnant — about such a notion; yet most of us do so test those with whom we are in danger of becoming “too close.”

We can, however, move beyond an initial, undeveloped reaction to Cicero’s view of the necessity of testing; for there is a fundamental flaw in his suggestion, a flaw to which his own discussion points. He suggests a problem but does not pursue it.

We ought, therefore, to choose men who are firm, steadfast and constant, a class of which there is a great dearth; and at the same time it is very hard to come to a decision without a trial, while such trial can only be made in actual friendship: thus friendship outruns the judgment and takes away the opportunity of a trial.

Friendships, if there are to be any at all, must be formed before we can have any certain knowledge that the other person is truly lovable, one suited for our friendship. This means that we may commit ourselves to persons

for whom our regard may fade. Yet, in thus committing ourselves to another person, we create in that friend a set of expectations, needs, and loyalties which cannot simply be set aside without pain and grief. Again we see that the bond of friendship seems to call for a permanence which it cannot itself provide. Try to avoid making mistakes in friendship, and we will have no friends at all. Acquire the necessary experience which only friendship and some “mistaken judgments” can provide, and in so doing, we make commitments and establish expectations which call for fidelity. Can the tension between friendship and fidelity be overcome? . . .

3. Either our desire for faithful friendship is sheer self-delusion or else it is permissible to hope for a day and a community in which such friendship might become possible, to hope that temporality and change might lose their relentless power over our commitments. *Agape*, with its steadfastness, should enter into friendship to perfect it. Friendship, with its warmth and mutuality, should be the internal fruition of *agape*. It was sound theological instinct, not mere wish-fulfillment, which led medieval thinkers to conceive of heaven as a “vast friendship.” Nothing less than this, a community in which friendship and charity are coextensive, will satisfy the needs of our nature. Nothing less than this will correspond to the mutuality of the triune life of God into which he wills to draw us.

Such a hope is expressed better by Augustine’s vision of life as pilgrimage toward the enjoyment of God than Kierkegaard’s sterner vision of love as duty brought about through transformation by the Eternal, a vision which tries too quickly to resolve the argument between *philia*<sup>2</sup> and *agape*. To think of love solely as a duty does, to be sure, recognize that any love which is attached to the friend because of his character will be subject to change if that character changes. However, love as duty purchases permanence at the cost of mutuality. The eternal steadfastness of Christian love should not simply replace the mutuality of *philia*. If friendship ends, a willingness to serve and help must never be withdrawn, but one must also hope for something more.

That something more is expressed in the vision of human life as pilgrimage toward the community God is fashioning. This more patient image permits us to take time and its terrors seriously without being overcome by them. It permits us to express better the complexities of relating *philia* and *agape*. Attachment to friends is a school in which we are trained for that greater community. Steadfast faithfulness in love is necessary even when a friendship ceases. But faithful friendship is the goal — a goal which can be realized only when the friend is loved in God. To love the friend in God is not to love what is godlike in the friend — precisely at that point Christian thought parts company with the classical conception of friendship. Not the friend’s goodness but the Goodness which possesses the friend and is refracted by the friend is what the eye is to discern. Only thus is the friend seen as God’s creature and loved appropriately.

We cannot resolve the tension between friendship and fidelity; we can only state some of the truths to which reflection upon this tension gives rise. Life is a journey, a pilgrimage toward that community in which friends love one another in God and time no longer inflicts its wounds on friendship. Along the way, friendship is a school, training us in the meaning and enactment of love. Friendship is also a foretaste of the internal reciprocities of love which have yet to be fully realized. And, it is important to add, friendship is a good which may have to be sacrificed here and now in order to be fully realized in the sharing of the divine life.

But to speak of faithful friendship is to conjoin in hope what cannot be fully united with human history. Time is not that easily or quickly tamed by eternity, and one must learn to be patient. Such patience is possible, however, for those who believe that the changeable character of our friendships — the work of time — need not stand in irreconcilable tension with the steadfastness of love transformed by the Eternal.

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<sup>2</sup> *Philia*, also a Greek word, is used here to describe love which depends upon appreciation or admiration of the character or effect of the person loved.



## “Confucian Friendship,” by David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames

A Confucian “friend”—a *yu*—who is not better than oneself is not properly a friend. Unlike the English word friend, *yu* for Confucius cannot be used loosely for mere acquaintances or strangers, or as a mark of goodwill or kindly condescension. The term conventionally translated as “friend” (*yu*) in classical Chinese is homophonous with *yu*, meaning the “right hand” as opposed to “left.” “Friend,” like the right hand, is valorized as the place of honor. As such, “friend” in classical Chinese is resolutely hierarchical—an occasion to grow personally—and can only be assigned to the *jen* relationship in which one is able to express deference to another. Friendship is based upon appreciated differences between oneself and another person which present themselves as specific occasions for one’s character development, rather than upon perceived commonalities with the other person.

*Yu* is also homophonous and used interchangeably in the classical corpus with *yu* (“having at hand”). It is having someone at hand to whom one can defer, and take as one’s model. *Yu* is going “hand-in-hand” with someone from whom one can benefit and learn, deriving as this term originally does from a [picto]graph comprised of “two hands.” [...]

In the peculiarly Confucian conception of friendship, then, we have certain conditions. First, a friend is a necessary condition for becoming authoritative in one’s person (*jen*). Hence, when asked about how to become *jen*, Confucius replies, “When living in a particular country, serve the most worthy of the high officials, and make friends with those scholars who are most *jen*.”

One must love a friend as a complementary aspect of one’s self, yet at the same time, allow such friends to retain their integrity. Again, although Confucius is clear that one cannot demand all-round perfection in a single person, the friend must on balance and in important respects be qualitatively superior to oneself—an object of personal deference. [...]

*Jen* is conventionally translated “benevolence,” “humanity,” and “goodness.” The problem with benevolence is that it individuates and psychologizes *jen*, reducing a holistic and relational conception of person to someone’s particular moral disposition. Humanity, a broader and hence more adequate term, still fails to do justice to the profoundly religious dimension of *jen*. In fact, it tends to set up the opposition we find in the contrast between religion and humanism. Friendship, for Confucius, is grounded in *jen*, and is, at the same time, the road to religiousness. Confucius, rather than appealing to transcendent beings or principles as the ultimate reference for spiritual growth, describes the process of personal cultivation in terms of “starting from what is most basic and immediate, and penetrating through to what is most elevated.”

What is the relationship, then, between Confucian friendship and religiousness? Confucian religiousness begins from the assumption that there is a continuity and interdependence between what has been translated as “Heaven” (*t’ien*), and “the human being” (*jen*). This correlativity between Heaven and the particular person is often captured in the claim that *t’ien-jen ho-yi* (literally, “Heaven and human beings are continuous”) used to summarize religious sensibilities during this period. Hence, Mencius<sup>3</sup> observes: “For a person to realize fully her heart-and-mind is to realize fully her nature and character, and in so doing, she realizes Heaven.”

The continuity and interdependence between Heaven and the human being precludes the notion of transcendent deity familiar within the orthodox theology of the Judeo-Christian tradition, cast as it is in the language of [...] independence, self-sufficiency, determinative and absolute power, and so on. The One-Many model of cosmic order—cosmos as universe—in which Godhead is the residence of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and in which all is to be ultimately explained by reference to divine will, is not operative in the classical Chinese world. The fundamental question is not: “What is the underlying cosmic unity which explains plurality?” but rather, “In a world in which a continuous and interdependent plurality of things (*wan-wu*) is all you’ve got, a world of self-originating, self-construing, and self-renewing things (*tzu—jan*)—where does a particular thing begin, and

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<sup>3</sup> Mencius was a Chinese philosopher in the 4th Century B.C.

where does it end?" Mencius thus says that "all of the myriad things are here in me." We can explain this claim in the following way.

Persons are always persons-in-context, inhering as they do in a world defined by specific social, cultural, and natural conditions. Persons shape and are shaped by the field of things and events in which they reside. A person is fluid and multivalent in the sense that, in any particular situation, he or she is open to redefinition in many different ways—as mother, as brother, as student, as lover, as Chinese, as tall, and so on. Articulated and brought into focus in any one of these roles, a person expresses the community from both a focal and a local perspective within the extended field of relationships. An analogy might help here. Consider the value of any particular note in a symphony, a symphony which is always entertained through one note or another. The value of any one note can only be assayed by understanding its place in the entire piece of music and its performance. Any one note thus has implications within it the entire score. The note has a holographic quality, bringing the field of relationships into focus from one particular place or locus. Important here is that the field of relationships is not circumscribed or holistic, but an unbounded reservoir of particular detail that remains open and available for further inclusion. The field of relevant detail for the particular note can be extended to include a movement in another piece by the same composer, or that composer's entire corpus, or the musical product of a particular era, and so on. [...]

This language of focus and field provides us with a way of talking about the continuity and interdependence of the human being and Heaven presupposed in the Confucian worldview. Heaven is the field "the social, cultural, and natural context" in some sense greater than the particular person ("Heaven grows the virtue here in me"), in some sense implicate within and brought into focus by the particular person ("all of the myriad things are here in me"). Heaven is frequently described in anthropomorphic terms: it is temporal, geographical, at once physical and psychical. But the relationship is bidirectional, and works the other way as well. The human being is also theomorphic. That is, when a person is successful in focusing culture and its institutions in a manner that is exemplary, and emerges as a model for his community and future generations to which they defer, he has extended himself through their patterns of deference, and has become the object of reverence. Hence, in the Confucian vocabulary, cultivation enlarges one's person (*ta jen*), so that one becomes describable in nothing less than cosmic terms, locating one squarely as Heaven: "Chung-ni (Confucius) is the sun and moon, and there is no way of climbing beyond him. [...] The Master is unreachable, just as the sky cannot be divided and scaled."

Where, then, is the friend (*yu*) in this process of religious realization? Persons in this tradition seek spiritual growth in the community of other persons who are themselves living (although at times dead) repositories of culture and the tradition's claim to Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Only those persons from whom one can learn and "increase," and who, through inspired deference, provide a source of meaning for oneself, are thus conducive to spiritual growth. Early in the quest, such friends are undoubtedly many. But one's spiritual extension absorbs these persons into one's own field of selves, and those remaining persons representing the quality of difference necessary for continuing growth become more difficult to find.

### **"An Indian View of Friendship," by Bhikhu Parekh**

Indian thinking on the subject [of friendship] goes as far back as the *Rigveda* composed around 1000 B.C.E. The *Rigveda* uses three terms to describe the relationship of friendship, namely, *sakha*, *mitra*, and *suhrd*. None of these is the exact counterpart of the modern conception of friendship, but none is wholly dissimilar either. Although sometimes the *Rigveda* uses the three terms to characterize different forms of friendship, on other occasions it uses them interchangeably. [...]

Almost from the very beginning, the Indian discussion of friendship took place at two levels, which for convenience I shall call metaphysical and social. At the metaphysical level, Indian thinkers asked what should be the proper human orientation, disposition, or attitude (*bhava*) towards the rest of the universe. In contrast to the anthropocentric and theocentric views of the universe dominant in the West, most Indian thinkers took a

cosmocentric view of it. For them the universe was an internally articulated and ordered whole whose constituents were all its equally legitimate “co-tenants” enjoying the right to exist and avail themselves of its resources. Human beings therefore had a duty of universal friendliness and goodwill (*maitri*) towards the other orders of being. Rather than grudge their existence and destroy them in pursuit of their narrowly defined species-interests, they are enjoined to cherish them and take delight in the infinite beauty and diversity of the universe. A remarkable prayer to Gods in *Sukla Yajurveda* reads: “I look upon all living beings with the eyes of a friend.” In *Taittiriya Samhita*, the author wishes “peace” to earth, trees, plants, waters, and indeed to all sentient beings and prays that he may not unwittingly injure even the root of a plant. [...] Friendship to all living beings leads to non-violence (*ahimsa*), meaning not only abstention from harming them but also the absence of a wish to harm them. [...]

[At the social level, w]hile being oriented to all other human beings and the rest of the universe in a spirit of friendliness, the individual also stands in specific relationships (*sambandha*) with specific individuals based on the ties of blood, caste, marriage, kinship, and so on. Friendship is one such bond or *sambandha*. For Indian thinkers it has several distinctive features, which mark it off from other types of relationship.

Friends are *suhrd* or “good-hearted” towards each other. The *Mahabharata* defines a friend as one who “gives his heart.” As Bharata puts it in the *Ramayana*, [...] “from good-heartedness is born friendship; harm is the sign of enmity.” Heart is considered to be the seat of both feeling and soul. The idea of shared feelings and a shared self is central to the Indian conception of friendship. My friend is someone who instinctively feels for and with me, and participates in my joys and sorrows. Our hearts are bonded; our relationship is based on hearts or rather we are related “at the level of heart,” and our hearts converge, know, and communicate with each other (*hridaya samvad*). In the classical Indian literature heart is often the seat of instinctive or inductive knowledge. A charioteer who knows the moods and understands the movements of his horses is said to have the heart of the horse (*ashvahridaya*). Friends understand each other without speaking and anticipate each other’s moods and thoughts. Friendship breaks down the barriers of selfhood or “ego consciousness,” such that the friends “flow” into each other and create a common or shared state of being. It is one way of partially overcoming the burden of particularity, and coming to feel at home in the world. Since friendship at its highest involves as close a merger between two individuals as is possible without losing their separate identities, many religious texts [...] conceptualize human relationship to God in terms of friendship. God is *sakha* (the “dearest friend”) and is best realized through *sakhitva* (devotion [...] in the spirit of friendship).

For Indian thinkers, those enjoying the closest possible friendship share a common soul or self and “feel as one.” This is how Krishna describes his friendship with Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*. “Let it be understood that Arjuna is one half of my body.” Elsewhere he says that they are really “one self that has been made twofold.”

[... F]riends reflect and manifest each other’s self, spirit, life-breath, or soul (*prana*) such that each discovers himself in the other. Friendship is a uniquely free relationship created voluntarily by those involved, and reveals to them and to the world at large the kinds of persons they are.

In the Indian conception of friendship, *sauhrda* or good-heartedness is associated with the three related ideas of *ananda* (“delight”), *sahaya* (“help”), and *abhaya* (“fearlessness”). Friends are dear (*priya*) to each other and give each other *ananda* (“pleasure,” “joy,” or “delight”). In the *Mahabharata*, Yudhishtira refers to Karna as [...] “one who enhances the joy of his friends.” In the Indian classical literature friendship is often associated with fun, merry-making, playfulness, agreeable and “amusing” conversation, escapades, and disregard of social conventions. Indeed friendship is the only relationship in which these things are permitted, and those involved [are] released from the stern demands of duty characteristic of other relationships. In the *Mahabharata*, Krishna and Arjuna are always alone when they talk about their military and romantic adventures [...], get drunk, or behave unconventionally.

Since friends care for each other, they render useful services (*sahaya*) to each other and make uncalculating sacrifices of time, energy, money, and even life. True friends are tested in adversity, and both the classical and popular literature are full of false friends being exposed in times of need. Although friends help each other, the help must spring from good-heartedness if it is to count as an act of friendship.

Friendship also involves fearlessness (*abhaya*). Friends not only pose no threat to each other but also know that they can always count on each other's affection, support, and loyalty. They can trust each other and be completely at ease and fearless in each other's company. In the *Mahabharata*, Krishna describes Karna as [...] one in whose presence his friends know no fear or anxiety. The concept of fearlessness is taken to imply that when friendship comes under severe strain, those involved may not speak to each other, but they must never betray each other, divulge information obtained during their friendship, or behave *as if* they had never been friends. "If a friendship breaks, a true friend's feelings towards that former friend undergo no change, as a lotus stalk, though cut, holds its shape," says the *Hitopadesa*. Friendship is supposed to entail lifelong commitments, and while it may be loosened, suspended, or even ended, it can never be "broken" and its obligations violated.

Loyalty to friends does not imply that one may not criticize them or point out and protest against their wrongdoings. Indeed, in the Indian discussion of friendship, friends are almost invariably described as sources of sincere advice and each other's conscience and critic, and those acquiescing in their friend's mistakes and misdeeds out of blind loyalty, self-interest, or cowardice are condemned. Friendship is one of the few relationships in which honest and fearless criticism is both permitted and required. Friends must "speak truth" (*satyam vada*) to each other; otherwise their friendship rests on untruth and is "false." While friends should be open and honest with each other, they are required to refrain from gossiping or saying unpleasant (*apriya*) things behind each other's back, revealing their limitations to outsiders, and doing things likely to harm or demean them in others' eyes. Critical when alone, friends are expected to present a loyal and united front to the world. The two are complementary. It is precisely because friends can count on each other's good feelings and loyalty that they enjoy the privilege of fearless criticism, and vice versa.

For Indian writers, then, friendship is a distinct kind of relationship. It is a voluntary bonding of hearts, and involves both shared feelings and shared selves. It is a source of joy and claims to mutual loyalty, care, and assistance, and creates an island of socially sanctioned asociality in which one may disregard normal social conventions. Since friendship involves bonding of hearts, which is also what characterizes familial and kinship relations, the Indian thinkers have as a rule conceptualized friendship in familial terms. A friend is a "brother" (*bhratr*) or "kinsman" (*bandhu*), and friendship is often called "brotherliness" or "brotherly disposition" (*bhratrabhava* [...]). A close friend *is* a brother; one not so close *is like* a brother. In either case friendship is assimilated to kinship. A friend is an adopted member of the family. [...] In several parts of India ceremonies have existed for centuries in which friends cement their relationships by taking appropriate vows and emerge as brothers. Whether or not friendship is formalized, a friend is viewed as "more or less" a brother and is expected to regard his friend's family as his own. He addresses his friend's parents, grandparents, uncles, brothers, and so on in the same way as the latter does or by their nearest equivalents. He shares food with them, an important privilege in a caste society with its rigid taboos, helps with the household chores, comes and stays with the family, enjoys more or less unrestricted access to it, and is generally given more or less equal love. Even the caste restrictions on marriages are slackened and occasionally waived in relation to friends. . . .

While Indian writers recognized that friendship was a valuable relationship, they were also troubled by several aspects of it. One might be required to bend rules or violate moral norms to protect a friend in trouble. The loyalty to a friend might require one to acquiesce in his misdeeds and even to assist him. Even if friendship involved no such partnership in evil, it morally privileged some and was fatally infected with partiality. What was more, it involved deep personal attachments, involved one in the lives of others, and stood in the way of the highest ideal of total detachment. Indian writers were deeply troubled by all this. Most insisted that true friendship was only possible between men of equally good virtue (*samansila*), for only such friends did not make morally unacceptable demands on each other. However, they knew that even the virtuous friends might occasionally get into awkward situations and require minor acts of immorality to help them out. In the *Mahabharata* Arjuna got into several difficult situations because of his impetuosity and arrogance, and Krishna, after suitably admonishing him, had to resort to small lies and devious moves to help him out. Although the *Mahabharata* does not justify such actions, it condones them, and is supported in this view by most moral and literary writers.

The other problematic aspects of friendship gave Indian writers considerable difficulty. They were convinced that friendship, which necessarily involved partiality, was incompatible with justice (*nyaya* or *dharrna*), which involved an impartial application of rules and norms and an equal regard for the well-being of all. They were also convinced that friendship militated against the cultivation of the spirit of total detachment (*anasakti*) from the world. Although they did not discuss the matter at length, Indian writers seem to have concluded that a truly just man or one seeking total detachment and liberation from the world of sorrow (*moksa*) can have no friends. [...]

It would seem that for Indian writers, every society needs both justice and friendship, and no society can be based on a morality centered on either alone. Friendship fragments society, creates countless islands of close relationships, and is too fragile to sustain society. As for justice, it is too abstract to engage human hearts and too dispassionate to generate action. Each is needed to correct the limitations of the other. In the beautiful imagery of the *Mahabharata*, each is divine and represents a partial manifestation of the total truth. Krishna, whose friendship (*sakhitva*) for Arjuna is celebrated as the highest possible level of friendship, and Yudhishtira, the paradigm of justice, are both considered indispensable and play complementary roles on crucial occasions. Their conflicts, disagreements, and compromises on crucial occasions offer valuable insights into the Indian view of how to secure a necessarily tentative balance between the demands of cold justice and warm friendship.