



AN APPRAISAL OF FRIENDSHIP IN KANT: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is the use of Kant's concept of friendship as a model of friendship towards correcting some erroneous friendship practices in the human society. The paper uses the method of exposition and hermeneutics to give a good understanding of the concept and models of friendship and why it is most appropriate to adopt friendship in Kant as a better option for the human society. In the attempt to achieving the set goals, the paper studies the concept of friendship, erroneous attitude to friendship in the human society, friendship in Kant minding the types and models of friendship as developed by Kant. The types of friendship include: friendship of need, taste and disposition. Amongst Kant's models of friendship is the Moral Friendship which has five promoting factors of well-wishing love to others, equity, reciprocal possession, intimate communication and openheartedness and love for mutual well-liking. The finding makes it obvious that man has the natural desire for friendship and shuns isolation. Similarly, from the research it is obvious that the society is bedeviled with lots of abuses and erroneous conceptions of friendship leading to deceit, swindling, crimes of different levels, betrayal, greed, wickedness, e.t.c. In the same vein, the finding reveals that Kant has achieved a milestone in developing a good attitude to friendship. Hence Kant can be said to have supplied the deficiency in societal conception of friendship. The implication of this paper is that amidst the challenges, deceit and abuses of friendship in the society, Kant's concept of friendship unequivocally proves a paradigm of friendship and a panacea to the twist of friendship. Therefore, Kant's concept of friendship is well poised towards rescuing friendship from the abuses and positioning friendship so as to satisfy the natural yearning in man for friendship.

Keywords: Kant, friendship, need, taste, disposition, moral.

Introduction

Man naturally desires to love and to be loved. This is a desire to be with others thereof shunning isolation¹. This is one of the natural instincts in man that gives rise to the tendency of relationship. Little wonder one of the early signs of mental illness is isolation. Man goes in search of this love at all cost and ready to exchange the highest of goods in life to secure and satisfy the hunger and desire to love and to be loved. When this is achieved, man feels whole, satisfied, fulfilled and complete thereof having a meaningful existence. This natural drive and search make man to desire friendship and other forms of relationship- belonging to associations and unions of various levels such as trade union, welfare associations, clubs, labour union to mention but a few. Most unfortunate is that this natural desire for friendship meets lots of hitches in the human society following deceit, selfishness, greed, wickedness, all forms of materialism, quest for power, lust, etc.

Like other problems of life, various philosophers have engaged in puzzles on how man can develop the best pattern of this relationship such that the afore mentioned values therein would be maximally actualized. In the history of philosophy, the concept of relationship has received a dose of philosophical attention. A fundamental question to these philosophical descriptions and attempts on friendship is, 'to what extent has they been able to give a consistent and robust description of friendship so such so as to provide an account of friendship that satisfies common intuitions and expectations of friendship? In keeping focus to this purpose, each epoch in the historical development of philosophy has addressed this matter as a philosophical consign from the early Greek philosophers through Medieval, modern and Contemporary Philosophers. It was in the 18th Century that Immanuel Kant the German Modern Philosopher developed various theories to this regard. Kant laid emphasis on friendship, knowing too well that no man is an island, that no one can survive without the help of the other, whether directly or indirectly. In spite of the attending challenges therein, Kant presented man as being in need of a friend, one in whom we can confide unreservedly, to whom we can disclosed completely all our dispositions and judgments, and need hide nothing and to whom we can communicate our whole self.

Towards actualizing these values, this paper is so arranged as to give a clearer insight into the meaning of friendship, Kant's various teachings on friendship as presented in his early lecture notes such as the friendship of need, friendship of taste and friend of disposition. This paper also tries to put side by side Kant's later discussions in his later lecture note on friendship. In the later lecture note on friendship, he developed the theory of moral friendship which is a paradigm in human relationship with the five promoting factors of well-wishing love to others, equity, reciprocal possession, intimate communication and openheartedness and love for mutual well liking. This later theory of Kant is a better actualization of human desire for friendship relationship than the early lecture theory already mentioned. Furthermore, this work also makes an appraisal of Kant's teachings and theories in order to determine the extent provides an account of friendship that satisfies the need of the contemporary society minding the common intuitions, desires and expectations of friendship.

What is Friendship

Friendship is a relationship of mutual affection between two or more people. Friendship is a stronger form of interpersonal bond than ordinary association. This is the state of being

friends. Hence this form of relationship exists between people who like each other and enjoy each other's company by feeling of affection or personal regard.

As the purest form of love, friendship is a rational relationship. It is in the nature of man to desire friendship. This can take different forms such as associations and unions; business friends, school friends, game friends, trade union, welfare associations, clubs, labour union to mention but a few. Unlike love relationship which can be irrational some times, friendship relationship is rational and begins by discovery of desirable qualities which include affection, loyalty, love, trust, similar interests and mutual respect. In order to experience friendship, you need to have true friends.

Friendship can also be true, false or pretentious. True Friendship provides emotional safety wherein one needs not weigh one's thoughts and measure words and it is long lasting². True friendship involves knowing someone better and taking a position in the other's best interest even in crisis. An example of true friendship is that between David and Jonathan in the Bible. Jonathan always intervened on behalf of his friend David so often that he endangered his own life and at one time narrowly escaping death at the hand of his father when he planned to kill David. He even risked his life by traveling a great distance to see David in hiding, knowing that his father surely had spies watching every move. Most surprising was that he did this even while he was aware that David would ascend the throne instead of himself. What a manifestation of true friendship! On the other hand, false or pretentious friendship is a caricature and contradiction to the word friendship. It is full of mistrust, disrespect, deception and sometimes leads to bad gangs and death. An example of false friendship was that between the Roman emperor Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus who betrayed him.

From the foregoing, it can be clearly visualized that for any friendship to be meaningful, there must be trust and confidence, there must be whole self-giving, and there must be communication. In essence, friendship cannot occur nor thrive in an environment where there is selfishness and self-centeredness. The best method of attracting true friends is by becoming a true friend oneself. Hence one ought to be an example of the true friend one wishes to see and have in the world. We all tend to attract people into our lives whose character mirrors our own. One has to make oneself into what one thinks others would find attractive.

Understanding Friendship in Kant

Kant defines the general idea of friendship as 'the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect'³. In his Lectures on Ethics, Kant argues that friendship in general evolves from the motive of the 'general love of mankind' in order to promote the happiness of others'⁴. Friendship thus presupposes concern for the alter ego⁵. However, on the basis of anthropological considerations, Kant observes that by nature man is above all, moved by the motive of self-love which attends to the happiness of oneself. Hence, it seems that in putting the motive of the general love of mankind above the motive of self-love, which is the right thing to do from a moral point of view, I forsake my own happiness⁶. Kant contends, however, that true friendship generates 'an exchange of welfare' He writes:

'if all men are so minded, that each looks out for the other's happiness, then each man's welfare will be nurtured by the rest; were I to know that others were caring for my happiness, as I would wish to care for theirs, I would be sure of not falling too short in any cultivation of my own happiness, for it would be made good to me, for however well a man

takes care of another's happiness, that other will be taking equal care of his. It looks as if a man loses, when he cares for other people's happiness; but if they, in turn, are caring for his, then he loses nothing. In that case the happiness of each would be promoted by the generosity of others, and this is the idea of friendship, where self-love is swallowed up in the idea of generous mutual love'⁷.

Having discussed the nature of the idea of friendship in general, Kant distinguishes in his Lectures on Ethics between friendship of need, taste and disposition⁸. This is a triadic structure closely resembling Aristotle's distinction based on utility, pleasure and virtue.

Types of Friendship in Kant

1. Friendship of need
2. Friendship of taste
3. Friendship of disposition.

Friendship of need

Need can simply be said to mean "the quality of being useful". Kant defines friendship of need as that type of friendship contracted purposefully for the mutual provision of the needs of life or the usefulness to the need of the other. This type of friendship echoes the popular saying "a friend in need is a friend indeed" or the Russian proverb, "a friend is known in a trouble". Friendship of need is therefore that type of friendship wherein the participants may entrust each other with a reciprocal concern with regard to their needs in life'¹⁰. Hence, it is characterized by the fact that the participants can have confidence and can presume that each of their friends would be able and willing to look after their affairs.

Friendship of need is considered to be the beginning of friendship among men as it arises in the most primitive and roughest social conditions. Kant refers to hunter gather societies where men have to be able to rely on each other in securing their common goals and basic needs for food, shelter, security, etc. As Kant will also contend in his late Lectures on Ethics, the need on which this kind of friendship is based is ultimately 'only the need for self-preservation, the protection so sorely needed against hostile threats, which constitute the bond that, chain them'¹¹. Consequently, Kant argued that in a state of luxury 'such friendship does not occur, and is not even wanted' for in such a state, man 'has many concerns of his own, and then he is all the less able to occupy himself with those of others, since he has himself to look after'.

As Kant already argues in his Lectures on Ethics from the mid 1760's: 'I am not convinced that another will sacrifice something for my sake. We have to be able to assume that one's efforts on his own behalf will be made also for us, and ours for his; but that is a great deal to expect, and so friends are few'. Moreover, the natural motive of self-love inevitably clashes with the moral motive of the general love of mankind. This means that actual friendship can be very defective in experience and therefore he calls friendship an idea¹². Hence, Kant assesses the idea of friendship as 'the maximum of mutual love'¹³ in that it 'enables us to measure friendship, and see how far it is still deficient'¹⁴.

For people in this kind of friendship, they do not even spend much time together. This is because they do not love each other. They only come together when they are mutually useful. In this type of friendship each tries to see what he can get from the other not what he can give. This kind of friendship could be called inferior because those who love for the sake of

need are selfish. They love for the sake of what is good for them without minding what the other person suffers. He said that this type of friendship was the original form of friendship among men in the crudest age. It could also be found among those in their middle age who are only interested in their own advantage. Friendship with foreigners is included in this class. Here a person makes friends hoping that he will benefit from such relationship.

Friendship of Taste

This is a kind of friendship existing between people of different classes and different occupations. It is the friendship that is fuelled by the taste we gain from each other's company and not from each other's happiness. As such once you are momentarily useful to me by keeping me company and satisfying me at the moment, then we are engaging in friendship of taste. This kind of friendship cannot exist among people working in the same field or people with the same area of interest. Thus for such friendship to exist, one must possess what the other does not have. Here, one is not attractive because he has what I already possess but because he can supply some wants of mine by supplementing that in which I am lacking. In other words, variety and not uniformity is the source of the friendship of taste. Friendship of taste consists in taking pleasure in the company and mutual association of the two parties, rather than their happiness'¹⁵. Kant contends that friendship of taste is outwardly expressed by 'courtesy'¹⁶.

Moreover, Kant argues that in friendship of taste men are bound together not by 'similarity', but rather by 'difference'¹⁷. For this reason, Kant contends that friendship of taste is therefore more likely to occur between men from different social levels:

between persons of similar calling: a friendship of taste is not so common as it is between those of differing occupations: thus one scholar will have no friendship of taste with another, for the one can do what the other can; they cannot satisfy or entertain one another, for what one knows, the other knows too; but a scholar may well have a friendship of taste with a merchant or soldier, and then each can entertain the other on his own subject¹⁸.

Kant's philosophical view on friendship of taste explains why Kant himself often had quarrels with fellow academics and philosophers and why he preferred to invite to his house friends from different social standings than his own such as; criminologists, government councilors, jurists, priests, bank masters, businessmen, apart. Just like friendship of need, friendship of taste does not last long. This is because once one of the parties is no longer pleasant to the other, the friendship ceases to exist.

Friendship of Disposition

'Friendship of disposition or sentiment' is characterized by unselfishness for it does not desire something from the other, need, service, etc., but is merely directed to the sincere, pure disposition of one person towards another¹⁹. This makes up for the delicacy of friendship because it 'does not reside in the fact that I see my friend's coffers to contain even a schilling for myself'²⁰. For these reasons, friendship of disposition is regarded as the most perfect form of friendship and is therefore called 'the friendship that is universal'²¹.

Friendship of disposition rests moreover on communion, openhearted communication and self-disclosure²². We therefore have need of a friend in whom we can confide, and to whom we may pour out all our views and opinions; from which we cannot and need not hide

anything and with whom we are fully able to communicate. On this, therefore, rests the friendship of disposition²³.

Friendship in Kant's Later Lectures on Ethics

Kant's second substantial account of friendship appears in his later Lectures on Ethics which is known as the *vigilantius*. Here Kant teaches the Moral Friendship. Moral Friendship is an 'ideal' which men certainly should strive to attain²⁴. Kant defines moral friendship as 'a complete love of well-wishing and also of well-liking among equals, in regard to their moral disposition and inclinations'²⁵. According to Kant, moral friendship is thus characterized by the following five features:

1. Well-wishing love to the other

This implies philosophic love or benevolence for the other. This shuns pathological love based on passion or sensibility but on 'practical love' which is based on practical reason or love whose determining ground is moral²⁶.

2. Equality

Kant denies that there can be any true friendship between unequals. For Kant, among unequals no real friendship occurs²⁷. Any relationship of inequality, in which one participant has superiority over the other, can only generate and display favour and is a hindrance to the intimacy of trust and the unity of personality between friends that allow them to share their thoughts, judgments, feelings and lives with one another²⁸.

3. Reciprocal Possession

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant also addressed this idea of reciprocal possession in terms of 'each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being'²⁹. The core idea behind the notion of reciprocal possession is that friends 'belong' to the other, i.e., 'that they possess each other in respect of their whole moral disposition and that each mutually shares in every situation of the other, as if it were encountered by him; and this, indeed, by laws of moral freedom'.

4. Intimate communication and openheartedness

This characteristic implies a mutual disclosure of thoughts between friends in openheartedness.

5. The love for mutual well-liking

Kant contends that this mutual well-liking 'lies solely in the intellectual disposition of the friends, engendered from the material of reciprocal esteem', which is the basis for the intellectual need for friendship³⁰. This feature turns friendship into an ethical duty.

However, in spite of the landmark made by Kant in his theory of friendship, P. Flynn thinks Kantian theory of friendship needs an unsparing critique because of its very many challenges. According to Flynn, Kant had no steady concept of friendship.

Flynn claimed that at the different stages of his lectures and writings, Kant presented different conceptions and in most cases seemingly opposing conceptions or theories of friendship. Following Flynn's logic, in his later days, Kant's works on *Metaphysics* seems to have contradicted what his earlier lectures on friendship already proposed. He defines the general idea of friendship as 'the union of two or more persons through equal mutual love and respect'³¹. Also, Flynn claimed in the above definition that Kant contradicted himself and referred to the assertion as a delicate balance wherein love can be regarded as attraction and respect as repulsion. Hence if the principle of love bids friends to draw closer, the principle of

respect requires them to stay at a proper distance from each other. We make bold to state that Kant's discourse on friendship does not really imply contradiction but different stages of unfolding the degree of fineness in friendship.

Moral Friendship in Kant as Ideal Friendship for Human Society

This paper has been able to establish that friendship is a natural, irresistible instinct and desire in the human person such that the desires for isolation can be said to be a symptom of mental disorder. However, friendship in the human society is challenged by very many abuses of cheating, deceit, betrayal, greed, wickedness, etc. Different attempts and approaches towards a solution to this problem made no much impact than Kant's. Hence the landmark made by Kant in his theory of friendship is worth commending especially as regards his later lectures in ethics where he developed the Moral Friendship. Quite unlike the early lectures in ethics, in his Moral Friendship, Kant developed a paradigm in human relationship.

In his Moral Friendship, Kant developed a master piece in friendship and relationship. Thus this form of friendship is practical enough to take care of the loopholes in his early lectures on friendship. Here, friendship is based on his five promoting factors of well-wishing love to others, equity, reciprocal possession, intimate communication and openheartedness and love for mutual well-liking.

Regarding friendship of need, there is a challenge of durability and sustainable relationship. This kind of friendship does not last long. It can be likened to a mushroom, which has no root and does not stand harsh times. Therefore friendship of need does not last long because it has no root. The reason is because once the expectations or benefits disappear, the friendship will also disappear. In the market, goods are looked for only if they are useful to the customer or individual. Once the goods become useless, they are abandoned and thrown away. This is so with the friendship of need. In the friendship of need, once that useful need which holds the friendship disappears, the friendship breaks up. This is the most obvious selfish and fake form of friendship in the society. It is a situation where people observe their peculiar need perhaps, material things such as money or sex in a particular person. They seek after such individuals professing fake care and friendship to win the solution to their financial challenge, sexual gratification, political positions or other needs.

Furthermore, friendship of need challenges the virtue of trust in relationship. Just as Kant already argued in his Lectures on Ethics: 'I am not convinced that another will sacrifice something for my sake. We have to be able to assume that one's efforts on his own behalf will be made also for us, and for his; but that is a great deal to expect, and so friends are few'³². Hence, there is a tendency of fears and lack of trust on the mutual fulfillment of duty to the friend. Also it is too exploitative, since each person will be making plans on how to benefit from each other and also to again too much from the little he puts in. This form of relationship lacks love. For people in this kind of friendship, they do not even spend much time together. This is because they do not love each other. They only come together when they are mutually useful. In this type of friendship each tries to see what he can get from the other not what he can give. Here, there is the game of mutual exploitation of each other in the guise of friendship.

The friendship of taste promotes classism. This is because this kind of friendship cannot exist among people working in the same field or people with the same area of interest. Thus for such friendship to exist, one must possess what the other does not have, "I am not attracted to

another because he has what I already possess but because he can supply some want of mine by supplementing that in which I am lacking. Here friendship uses the human person as a means which is a contradiction to Kantian categorical imperative wherein he affirmed that the human person cannot be used as burdens (means) rather should be considered as an end in itself³³.

Each stage in Kant's development of friendship has a dose of beautiful qualities towards true friendship. Nevertheless, minding these different stages, Kant's Moral Friendship proves to be the ideal for the human society. Minding the promoting factors of Moral Friendship such as; well-wishing love to others, equity, reciprocal possession, intimate communication and openheartedness and love for mutual well liking; Kat's idea of friendship will go a long way abating the erroneous and self-centered experiences of friendship in the society.

Conclusions

This paper has defined friendship as a relationship of mutual affection between two or more people. Friendship can be either true or false. True Friendship provides emotional safety and lasts³⁴ and is characterized by trust, confidence, self-giving, communication, etc. An example of true friendship is that between David and Jonathan in the Bible. On the other hand, false or pretentious friendship is a caricature and contradiction to friendship characterized by mistrust, disrespect, deception, and selfishness/self-centeredness and sometimes leads to bad gangs and death. An example of false friendship was that between the Roman emperor Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus who betrayed him.

Unfortunately, this paper identified that friendship in the society is faced with lots of deception, mistrust selfishness, greed, e.t.c. This forlornness of friendship in the society is the motivation towards finding an auspicious solution towards restoring friendship to its purity in the society. This attempt led this paper to the works of Kant on friendship. Hence the work made an x-ray of Kant on friendship considering how his account satisfies the natural human yearning, common intuitions and expectations of friendship. Nevertheless, the work considered the practicality of the theory bearing in mind other changing factors in human existence which is not the same for everyone and every place.

There are good dose of catalyst to true friendship by Kant which give suiting panacea to the battered attitude and concept of friendship in the society. Kant argues that friendship in general evolves from the motive of the 'general love of mankind' in order to promote the happiness of others³⁵. Friendship thus presupposes concern for the alter ego³⁶. Kant had three types of friendship: friendship of need, taste and disposition/sentiment. In his later lecture on ethics, he developed the concept of moral friendship with its five characteristics. According to Kant, the five imperatives or factors of well-wishing love to others, equity, reciprocal possession, intimate communication or openheartedness and love for mutual well-liking ought to form the base of friendship. These make it possible that whatever happens between friends is typically mutual and devoid of selfishness/self-centeredness leading to mutual care, love and support. Also, these factors accounts for the self-disclosure which a friend makes to his friend when he is being weighed down by problems of life, the correction of one's judgment which one receives from a friend, the growth in virtue as a result of associating with a friend are all appreciable values.

Hence haven established that friendship is a natural, irresistible instinct and desire in the human person such that the desires for isolation can be said to be a symptom of mental

disorder and haven exposed the deplorable conditions experienced in the human society in matters of friendship, this paper considers Kant's concept of friendship as a round peg in a round hole towards abating the societal challenges in friendship. Therefore the implication of the study shows that amidst challenges, deceit and abuses of friendship in the society, Kant's concept of friendship unequivocally proves a paradigm of friendship and a panacea to the twist of friendship. We make bold to claim hence that Kant's concept of friendship is well poised towards recuing friendship from the abuses and positioning friendship so as to satisfy the natural yearning in man for friendship.

End Notes

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