

ONE

PREFERENCE FOR FRIENDS

INTRODUCTION

A PREFERENCE FOR FRIENDS over nonfriends is at the core of friendship.¹ For example, someone who professes friendship for another person but who acts in no special way toward her in comparison to others or who acts toward her only with what morality requires, but no more, is not considered her friend. Friendship must involve some special preference between friends. Friends preferring each other has been understood as a description of behavior, as a moral prescription, and as a defining characteristic. Two people who treat each other no differently from the way they treat all others would not be considered friends.

Preferring friends to nonfriends is something that friends naturally desire. They prefer spending time together, engaged in the activities of friendship, to spending time with those who are not their friends. Time spent with nonfriends can be boring and a chore. That friends also have an obligation to prefer each other to nonfriends is thought to be morally correct by most individuals and cultures. Not only should friends do more good for each other, but stronger moral prohibitions often exist against harming friends than harming nonfriends. The friendship relation is partial, specific, and particular. By definition, persons who are friends participate in a relationship that they

do not and cannot share with everyone else. Friendship, like kinship, marks off a difference and a specialness that differentiates friendship from moral relations that can universally apply to everyone.

Is preferring friends to nonfriends morally justifiable? A number of philosophers, including Michael Stocker, Martha Nussbaum, and Lawrence A. Blum, among others, have noticed a *prima facie* conflict between friendship and objective, universal, egalitarian, impersonal, or impartial moral principles. They have used this conflict as a reason for questioning not only the legitimacy of friendship but also the justifiability of morality itself and its specific principles. A radically different view is advocated by Jacques Derrida.² For friends to benefit each other, either at the expense of, or by ignoring, nonfriends, they claim, is in conflict with these moral principles and the morality they reflect. Other philosophers, such as Bernard Williams, resolve the conflict by claiming that preferring friends is obviously morally right.³ This “obvious” and perhaps ultimately correct position can obscure many vital philosophical issues. Suppose it is obviously true that friends sometimes should be treated with preference in comparison to nonfriends; it is equally obviously true that at other times friends should not be treated with preference in comparison to nonfriends. Philosophically important questions need to be answered: When is preferential treatment of friends justifiable? When is it not justifiable? Precisely, what kinds of reasons morally justify any preference and set its limit?

There may be reasons internal to the concept of friendship that provide moral justification for preferring friends, perhaps resembling the way that moral obligations are internal to promising. In addition to internal justifications, moral principles external to friendship provide a variety of reasons specifying divergent limits of preferring friends to nonfriends. Yet both internal and external moral justifications of preference in friendship are dependent upon an answer to the most elementary philosophical question: What is friendship? A number of related but nonequivalent conceptions of friendship exist within and without our Western philosophical tradition that give different “obvious” answers to the question, should friends prefer each other to nonfriends, so that a plurality of morally correct answers is possible.

A good deal of philosophical analysis must be undertaken to supply a coherent understanding of preference for friends. Most importantly, a critical schema for comparing and contrasting various different conceptions of friendship needs to be developed. Only through this schema can conceptions

of friendship be clearly distinguished and compared, so that it is possible to discover internal justifications for preferring friends to others and to apply external moral principles to determine when and how much preference is justifiable. While conceptions of friendship differ from each other, they all, nevertheless, possess a similar structure that is essential in understanding their resemblances and differences.

The remainder of this chapter sets the stage by refining issues of rights and duties in friendship, by contrasting two of the more important Western conceptions of friendship, Aristotle's and Kant's ideals, and then by briefly introducing other diverse friendship conceptions. Chapter 2 explains the common structure of all conceptions of friendship. Chapter 3 examines moral justifications for preferring friends that are internal to friendship. In chapter 4, preference for friends is justified from three external moral perspectives: liberty, equality, and utility. Chapter 5 defends the value of a "less-than-ideal" conception of friendship and summarizes salient results of earlier chapters.

There has never been a thoroughgoing examination of various conceptions of friendship and the more commonly employed moral principles. Partisan and myopic investigations have reached mixed results. Sometimes supposed conflicts between a vague conception of friendship and some moral principle are used to criticize that moral principle because it conflicts with friendship's demands.⁴ Troy A. Jollimore is a recent example. In an otherwise carefully argued book, *Friendship and Agent-Relative Morality*, he employs a much too vague conception of friendship to criticize consequentialist morality.⁵ At other times, possible conflicts between friendship and morality are used to criticize what is called foundationalism, that is, any attempt to justify moral institutions or practices by fundamental moral principles.⁶ At another extreme, various conceptions of friendship are rejected as being thoroughly immoral, because they appear to conflict with one or another moral principle.

A more general and more neutral approach is worth pursuing. Rather than using friendship merely to criticize one's least favorite moral principle or using one's favorite principle to defend a form of friendship that is not well analyzed, it is more illuminating to explore the complex relationships between various conceptions of friendship and a fairly comprehensive list of plausible moral principles. A more open approach will produce a less biased and more accurate understanding of the complex relations between friendship and moral principles.

PREFERENCE: DUTIES AND RIGHTS

Although analyzing friendship wholly in terms of duties and rights is misleading, because friendship involves caring for and goodwill, as well as duty or rights, preferring friends to others can still be partially understood in terms of moral rights and duties. Friends frequently assist and benefit each other without ever considering any moral rights or duties. Acting with goodwill and concern for each other is part of what creates or constitutes happiness for friends. Nevertheless, duties and rights constitute part of many conceptions of friendship.

That we owe special duties to our friends or that we ought to treat friends with special preference is a belief held by almost every culture. This belief implies that a special duty to help our friends is stronger than any duty of beneficence owed to humanity in general. Similarly, our duty to refrain from harming friends is believed to be stronger than any general duty of nonmaleficence. For some conceptions of friendship (Aristotle's friendship based on utility is just one example), friends are to be there when help is needed. Friends are special relations who can be counted upon for assistance in times of crisis as well as relations who are sought out to share benefits in good times. Even though friends may want to help each other without ever thinking of obligations, obligations do exist. Many conceptions of friendship contain expectations that friends recognize a special duty to assist each other. Certainly a friend's failing to help in a time of need without having any compelling reason would be subject to specially severe blame and guilt.

Special duties, what W. D. Ross calls "parti-resultant" duties, depend on certain particular relations such as being a parent, an employer, or a friend, that constitute one part of a whole situation.⁷ Special duties, in Ross's sense, also are *prima facie* not duties proper, because they can conflict with and be overridden by other *prima facie* duties. Special duties arise in two distinct ways. For some special duties, only persons who are in the special relations have the duties in any degree whatsoever. An illustration of this kind of special duty comes from the Old Testament, where a man has a duty to marry his brother's widow, even if the man is presently married. Nonbrothers have no duty at all to marry widows, and married men without brothers may not acquire additional wives. Teachers also may have special duties to their students which nonteachers lack entirely. The second kind of special duties includes ordinary duties that are magnified, that is, duties that everyone has to some degree but that are stronger because of a special factor or relation. Everyone

may have a duty to be kind to others, but parents have a greater duty to be kind to their children than to nonkin. Failing to live up to one's duty toward friends in this sense may be a more blameworthy dereliction than is an identical failure toward a nonfriend. Stronger blame may be justified, because of the stronger duty that is violated. Variations exist, however, among different forms of friendship. Some forms would view the dereliction more seriously, while other forms might view it as less blameworthy.⁸

There is an additional way that friends are expected to act specially toward each other. Friendship, as it is sometimes understood, requires that friends treat each other in a morally exemplary way. Failure to live up to all moral expectations is less tolerated between friends than between nonfriends, although there are forms of friendship in which friends are expected to be more forgiving of each other for failing to live up to moral ideals. Nevertheless, for many forms of friendship, friends are supposed to have a special concern for each other that manifests in morally ideal behavior. While it is never morally right to behave toward anyone in an immoral way, there is a greater tolerance of one's moral imperfection if one's failure is directed toward nonfriends rather than friends. Friends are expected to try harder to be good to each other in difficult circumstances. For example, letting down one's friend by failing to behave toward her as she morally deserves is a major shortcoming. Friends should feel greater guilt and embarrassment in behaving badly to each other than to those with whom they are not friends. Behavior between friends exemplifies the very best in human conduct. Later, this moral requirement of friendship, that friends treat each other in a morally exemplary way, plays a major role in understanding whether treating friends better than nonfriends is morally justified.

The preference that friends exhibit toward each other need not take the form of moral duties of assistance or rescue. Special preferential behavior constituting friendship may take the form of a responsibility to receive each friend's personal thoughts and confidences. Friends may be intimate with each other yet feel no duty to be intimate with nonfriends. Some forms of friendship regard intimacy as being essential to friendship, while other forms may only regard it as being permissible. Friends can be intimate with each other, but they also may merely choose to share external interests and activities.

Not all of the ways that friends express preference for each other affect moral duties. Some ways create more while other ways create less potential moral conflict. There are many circumstances, such as choosing someone to go to the cinema with, where no moral considerations normally apply. Certainly it

is right to choose to go with one's friend, but it would be equally right to choose to take one's sister, or even to choose to go alone. Preferring friends may be right, that is, morally permissible, because no rights of others are involved, or because preferring friends conflicts with no other duties or obligations.

FRIENDSHIP AND PROMISING

A close parallel exists between preference for friends and promising, which nicely illustrates the moral issue of preferring friends to others. Promising is a rule-constituted social institution that permits coordination of people's activities through voluntarily undertaken moral obligations.⁹ Many different social institutions of promising are possible. They are distinguishable from each other by their different constitutive rules. Different forms of promising have constitutive rules that delineate promises: how they are made, when they may be broken, and the strength of the obligation. Within each form of promising, there may be different kinds or degrees of promises (e.g., common agreements, pledges, vows, and oaths). Particular forms of promising differ from each other by rules that, among other things, specify conditions under which a promise may legitimately be broken, for example, if the burden is too great for the promisor or too great for the promisee, if there are unforeseen burdens on third parties, if the promisee changes her mind, and so forth. Different rules will exist for indicating the strength of the duty to keep the promise. Assuming that there are different degrees of obligation within the particular institution, the obligation to return a borrowed book may be less strong than the obligation arising from a pledge to visit a friend in the hospital.

While all forms of promising have in common undertaking some moral obligation or other, the content and strength of the obligation depend on society's rule-constituted form of promising. Since different societies have different institutions of promising, it cannot be assumed that a particular society's institution of promising is morally correct, and that the duties imposed on those who make promises are morally justified duties. For any particular form of promising, it therefore makes sense to ask whether the institution, as well as promises made according to its rules, is morally justified.

Friendship closely resembles promising. Different forms of friendship are constituted by various sets of rules and expectations about who may become friends, how friends should treat each other, what activities typify friendship, the purposes of friendship, and what should attract friends to each other. Different societies may have one or a number of different forms or conceptions

of friendship, each with its own specific expectations. Within a society, different forms of friendship are possible, each with its own set of rules and each with its own level of social value. To create a friendship is to undertake certain specific expectations, both moral and nonmoral about each friend's behavior.¹⁰ These expectations are what the participants impose upon themselves when they become friends: how much time they should spend together, how much assistance they owe each other, how much intimacy or self-disclosure is appropriate, and what assets they should share. The kinds of preferences friends exhibit for each other in contrast to nonfriends therefore vary with each particular individual form or conception of friendship.

To discover in what circumstances preferring friends to nonfriends is morally justifiable, different conceptions or forms of friendship must be morally evaluated. By "form" or "conception" of friendship, I mean a specific set of expectations for being friends. Moral justifications for preferring friends to nonfriends depend to a great extent on which conceptions of friendship are morally justifiable, assuming that there may be more than one morally justifiable conception. As with promising, some of the expectations will prove to be immoral (e.g., promises to commit murder). Not every way of preferring friends to nonfriends will be morally justified, nor will every actual instance of preference.

There are, in principle, two different ways of morally evaluating conceptions of friendship. The first, which I call the external justification, evaluates friendship by independent, rationally grounded, moral principles. In an external justification, a conception of friendship, with its constitutive rules and internally defined concepts, is examined in light of some moral principle to see whether its rules and concepts fulfill the justificatory requirements of the principle. According to utilitarian theory, for example, a form of friendship would be studied to see whether it directly or indirectly produces the best overall consequences. A Kantian justification might require that a specific form of friendship should respect all rational beings, both friend and nonfriend, as necessary ends and never treat them merely as means. A libertarian moral principle might permit people to initiate specific kinds of friendships, as long as the rights of others are not violated. Each external justification must include an examination of the basis of friendship, its object, and the nature of friendship, as defined by the particular conception.¹¹ External justifications should not only be capable of morally evaluating special rights and duties included in the particular form of friendship but also should be capable of determining when, and under what circumstances, friends are justifiably preferred or treated better than nonfriends.

An external justification can have no greater moral cogency than that possessed by its justificatory moral principle. The more firmly grounded any moral principle is then the more confidence there can be in an external justification of a conception of friendship. If, to illustrate, direct-act utilitarianism were firmly grounded by rational argument, then it would be morally right to act with preference toward one's friends in, and only in, those circumstances that produce the best possible consequences. However, to the degree that direct-act utilitarianism is not firmly grounded but is open to criticism or objection, so similarly under suspicion will be an external justification of preferring friends to others based on utilitarianism.

A great deal can be learned by examining various kinds of friendship from a variety of moral perspectives. Some kinds of friendship may turn out to have fewer potential conflicts with rationally plausible moral principles than others. Conflicts can result from any aspect of the structure of friendship, its basis, object, or the nature of the relation, or from them in combination. One important conclusion of this investigation is that Kant's conception of the best achievable friendship is less likely to require the kinds of conflict-producing preferential action toward friends than many other conceptions of friendship. Consequently, conflicts between preferring friends to nonfriends are minimized if friendship is understood according to Kant's best form.

Whatever one's moral allegiances, external justifications illuminate logical relations between moral principles and various conceptions of friendship. Partisans of one of these moral principles will discover what their principle rationally commits them to regarding the moral justifiability of friendship. Chapter 4 discusses external justifications of friendship and preferring friends from the perspectives of liberty, equality, and utility.

The second way of evaluating preference for friends is to see whether conceptions of friendship contain their own moral standards. This I call the "internal justification." If, as some conceptions of friendship require, friends should always act toward each other in the very best possible moral manner, then there may be moral standards internal to the concept of friendship that determine when preferring friends to nonfriends is morally right and when it is morally wrong. Less-than-ideal conceptions of friendship may likewise contain internal prescriptions defining appropriate behavior between friends, but some of their prescriptions may be less than morally ideal.

Internal justifications, discussed in chapter 3, have two primary difficulties to overcome. The first is endemic to both internal and external attempts to justify preferential treatment of friends. Justifications for preferring friends

must be sufficiently specific to supply guidance in deciding when friends may rightly receive better treatment and when not. Internal justifications face many difficulties in achieving this precision. The second difficulty that internal justifications face is much more their own. If friendship is regarded as exemplifying the best in human behavior, then it is difficult to see how friendship justifies treating some people better than others. If friendly behavior is morally ideal behavior, then is it only friends to whom such behavior is limited? Internal justifications must explain when the morality internal to friendship legitimates preferring friends to nonfriends.

Great clarity is required to discuss different conceptions of friendship. There are many different conceptions of friendship both within Western culture and in other cultures. The moral implications of these conceptions of friendship are very different from each other. Up until now, discussions of the differences between the various conceptions have remained vague and overly general, because the internal structure of friendship has not been well understood. Of course, it has been known since Aristotle that friendships can have different bases: pleasure, utility, and goodness. The other structural dimensions of friendships that differ from each other (i.e., in their objects and in their natures) have not been well appreciated. Chapter 2 makes all of this clear. But the discussion in that chapter will be clearer if several conceptions of friendship are first sketched out to illustrate the possible range of difference.

TWO IDEALS: ARISTOTLE AND KANT

Aristotle's conception of the best form of friendship has had more influence on Western ideas about friendship than any other. Nancy Sherman calls this friendship "virtue friendship," and John Cooper refers to it as "character friendship."¹² This "best friendship," according to Aristotle, is between equals in virtue who "wish well to each other" and bear each other "goodwill" because of their moral goodness.¹³ A friend is "another self," and friends consider all they possess to be common property.¹⁴ More than anything, friends desire to live together, spending as much time as possible with each other helping to promote their virtue.¹⁵ Nancy Sherman sees "virtue friends" sharing a life together, not only in their activities but also in choosing and planning together in ways that take into account not only their commitment to each other but also their separate individuality.¹⁶

Aristotle's best friendship, unlike his friendships of lesser value, does not depend on external benefits that friends produce for each other. In his lesser

friendships, friends love each other because of the utility or pleasure they gain from the relation. Utility-based friendships are friendships where friends count on each other in times of need. Utility friends are “there when you need them,” “willing to lend a helping hand,” and “someone to be counted on.” While it is still true that utility friends have reciprocal goodwill for each other and do not merely use each other as a means, it is the overall benefit of the relationship that creates their mutual love.¹⁷

Character or virtue friends desire to share their lives together engaging in virtuous activities. Their lives are happy, according to Aristotle, who believes that happiness is an activity of the soul according to right reason or virtue. The activity component of friends’ shared virtuous life needs to be emphasized. Friends do things together. Aristotle says virtually nothing about the inner or private mental lives of friends. When friendship is thought about today, it is assumed that friends are intimate and know a great deal about each other’s inner or private mental life.¹⁸

Kant’s conception of the best form of friendship is a friendship based on intimacy and communion. In contrast to Aristotle, Kant’s intimacy friendship supposes that friends will spend time sharing their feelings or emotions and informing each other about their opinions or sentiments. Friends are thought to be mutual confidants, with their friendship aiming at similar internal mental states or communion. This understanding of Kant’s intimacy friendship also is well explained by Lara Denis in her article “From Friendship to Marriage: Revising Kant.”¹⁹

None of this inner mental life is explicitly found in Aristotle’s account of character or virtue friendship. It might be assumed that if two character or virtue friends share enough of their lives together, they will become intimate and learn a great deal about each other’s inner life, but the exchange of private thoughts need not occur, even if two friends spend a great deal of time together. Their time with each other may be consumed wholly in joint activities, leaving little time for (idle?) intimate chatter. Friends may, nevertheless, learn about each other’s private lives, but such knowledge will not be the object of their friendship, and it will arise indirectly and “casually.”²⁰ To argue that character friendships are intimate may be reading back anachronistically more than Aristotle actually says about friendship.²¹ David Konstan, in his book, *Friendship in the Classical World*, acknowledges that, “Never in antiquity, so far as I am aware, is the revelation of personal intimacies described as necessary for the formation of friendship.”²² In contrast to Aristotle, Kant’s conception of ideal friendship is based on intimacy and communication of private and personal thoughts.

Aristotelian character or virtue friends treat each other in ways that they do not treat nonfriends.²³ First, they will want to spend as much time with each other as they can and share what they own as common property. This is not behavior that they will display to nonfriends. They also will want to do good and avoid doing evil to each other to a greater extent than they will desire to do good and avoid evil for nonfriends. As Aristotle says:

[I]t is a more terrible thing to defraud a comrade than a fellow citizen, more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger, and more terrible to wound a father than any one else. And the demands of justice also naturally increase with the friendship.²⁴

A special duty exists between friends, at least in the sense of a magnification of the ordinary duties of benevolence and nonmalevolence. There are negative duties not to “defraud” or “wound” as well as positive duties to “help” and be “just” that are owed to both friends and nonfriends. Aristotle is saying that with friends, these duties increase in the strength of obligation. Most ways that Aristotle believes friends act with preference to each other are magnifications of duties owed to all, for example, helping to become virtuous,²⁵ or to better see the truth.²⁶ These are duties that everyone owes, to some extent, to everyone else. However, at least one special duty exists that is not an ordinary duty magnified. Even though Aristotle believes in a positive duty of benevolence, sharing all property in common is not something that is owed to any degree to nonfriends. Thus to the extent that sharing all in common is a duty of virtue or character friendship, it is a special duty possessed only by friends and not by nonfriends in any degree at all.

Whether Aristotle is right in thinking that friends have special or stronger duties to each other is one of the main questions of this book. A subsidiary, but just as important, question is, will friends act with preference toward each other in situations where it is not justified? Friendship has its darker side. Will feelings of loyalty mislead friends, seducing them away from their legitimate moral responsibilities? Cicero fears that friends will believe that friendship justifies doing something for each other that otherwise would be immoral.²⁷ The danger always exists that misguided friendships will cause much harm. Aristotle’s virtue friends, while equally virtuous, are not perfectly so. They may think that they should assist each other at the expense of nonfriends in situations where preferring each other is not justified. This fear about friendship’s darker side is more fully discussed in chapter 4.

While Aristotle's friends of the best kind may benefit each other a great deal as a consequence of their reciprocal goodwill and preferential treatment, they are not friends because of these benefits. Their reason for being attracted to each other is their virtue and goodness, not how they may benefit. Advantage, benefit, and pleasure are bases for Aristotle's less-than-ideal friendships.

Character friends will have many activities with which to occupy their shared life. The basis of character friendship is virtue, that is, for Aristotle, activity of the right kind. Friends will engage in similar daily exercises and gymnastics insofar as exercise is necessary for health and they are roughly equal in body and strength. To the extent that they are similar in knowledge, they will cooperate in learning and contemplation to strengthen their virtue of wisdom. They will assist each other in temperance training to bring their pleasures and pains into the right proportion. There is no shortage of the right kind of activities to engage their time and interest in order to improve their virtue. Character friends are equal in virtue, according to Aristotle, but they are not perfectly virtuous. For them to be perfectly virtuous, they would have to be gods, and unless they both were perfectly virtuous, they could not be friends.²⁸

It is not possible to have a large number of virtue friends. Living together in a shared life requires so much time that it is not possible for more than two or three persons to be virtue friends together. There is not sufficient time in a day. For other conceptions of friendship, greater numbers of friends may be possible. One nonmoral criterion for assessing the relevance of various conceptions of friendship will be the number of friends it is possible to have according to each conception.

Aristotle's conception of the best form of friendship, as well as his conception of his two lesser forms, is more fully discussed in chapter 2 as illustrations of the structure of friendship and as a further illustration of the wide variety of possible kinds of friendship.

I now discuss, in somewhat greater detail, Kant's ideal of friendship. My reason for spending more time at this point on Kant's ideal is that it is not nearly as well known as Aristotle's. I want to stress the differences between Kant and Aristotle here rather than the similarities that exist between their two conceptions in order to create a preliminary impression of the range existing in possible kinds of friendship. I end this introductory chapter by briefly discussing some additional, different ideals of friendship.

Kant distinguishes between two different concepts of valuable friendship, one of which is merely an "idea unattainable in practice" and the other of which can be attained, but with difficulty.²⁹ The unattainable friendship is "the

union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect . . . each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being through the morally goodwill that unites them."³⁰ The love and respect that constitute friendship Kant carefully differentiates from the love and respect considered feelings. Love is to be understood neither as a feeling (*ästhetischen*) of pleasure in the perfection of other men nor as a delight in them; instead, it is to be understood as benevolence and practical love.³¹ Respect must be understood as the maxim of limiting one's self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in others, not as a mere feeling of comparing one's worth to others.³² This friendship is unattainable in practice, Kant states, because it is impossible to discover whether friends' love and respect are really equal. Kant's explicit reason for thinking that this friendship is unattainable in practice, namely, not being able to discover whether friends' love and respect are really equal, is not a reason explaining the failure to attain ideal friendship, as Kant claims, but only of ever knowing that it is attained.

There is another possible explanation why Kant thinks that this friendship is unattainable in practice. In his discussion of the duty of gratitude, Kant points out that being the recipient of a kindness creates an inequality that can never be removed. One friend who, out of practical love, performs a kindness for another creates a permanent friendship destroying inequality between them.³³ So although equality between friends is impossible to achieve, Kant believes that this ideal friendship serves as a goal for which to aim, a goal that is equivalent to fulfilling the categorical imperative's morally demanding injunction to act with benevolence and respect to all rational beings.

Problems surface within Kant's ideal conception of friendship that go beyond his difficulty about the impossibility of ever discovering and maintaining reciprocally equal love and respect. His equal love and respect conception of friendship violates an essential characteristic of friendship, that is, that friendship is partial, specific, and particular, so that a person cannot, by definition, be a friend to everyone. Friendship requires that friends treat each other in ways that they do not treat all others. Privileges and obligations in friendship are not extended to nonfriends. Kant's ideal conception of friendship requires behavior between friends identical to the respect as necessary ends required by the categorical imperative for behavior toward all people. As a result, those requirements of friendship are no different from the behavior that everyone is expected to extend toward all rational moral beings. Acting on the demands of friendship, according to this conception, is no different from acting on the demands of impartial (and perhaps impersonal) morality. Kant simply identifies friendship with ideal moral behavior. Other philosophers make this identification as well;

Neera Kapur Badhwar is one of a number of examples.³⁴ It is a frequent theme with some philosophers to regard the way friends ought to be treated as manifesting the highest ideal of moral behavior. But there always must be some differentiation between friendship and morally exemplary behavior that is owed to all persons. While it must be possible to treat anyone in the way one behaves toward a friend, and to this extent the behavior must be universalizable, the demands of friendship on friends' behavior toward each other must also illustrate the essentially particular nature of its relation. The love and respect required by Kant's ideal conception of friendship do not show why friends are special. Love and respect are simply the ideal moral behavior required by the categorical imperative toward everyone.

Kant discusses his other and attainable ideal of friendship in both *The Metaphysics of Morals* and *Lectures on Ethics*. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he calls it "moral friendship."

Moral friendship (as distinguished from friendship based on feeling [*ästhetischen*]) is the complete confidence of two persons in revealing their secret judgments and feelings to each other, as far as such disclosures are consistent with mutual respect.³⁵ (emphasis in original)

In the *Lectures on Ethics*, this ideal is called "fellowship or disposition friendship."

But if we can free ourselves of this constraint, if we can unburden our heart to another, we achieve complete communion. That this release may be achieved, each of us needs a friend, one in whom we can confide unreservedly, to whom we can disclose completely all our dispositions and judgments from whom we can and need hide nothing, to whom we can communicate our whole self. On this rests the friendship of dispositions and fellowship.³⁶

This same idea also appears in *The Metaphysics of Morals*:

If he finds someone intelligent—someone who, moreover, shares his general outlook on things—with whom he need not be anxious about this danger but can reveal himself with complete confidence, he can then air his views. He is not completely alone with his thoughts, as in a prison, but enjoys a freedom he cannot have with the masses, among whom he must shut himself up in himself. Every man has his secrets and dare not confide blindly in others, partly because of a base cast of mind in most men to use them to one's disadvantage and partly because many people are indiscreet or incapable of judging and distinguishing what may or may not be repeated. The necessary combination of qualities is seldom found in one person . . . especially since the closest friendship requires that a judicious and trusted friend be also bound not to share the secrets entrusted to him with anyone else, no matter how reliable he thinks him, without explicit permission to do so.³⁷

Kant believes that the world is an unfriendly place where people usually cannot trust each other. Disposition friendship arises, Kant believes, because “We all have a strong impulse to disclose ourselves, and enter wholly into fellowship; and such self-revelation is further a human necessity for the correction of our judgment when it is mistaken.”³⁸ This impulse to disclose ourselves, however, need not always aim at self-correction because, Kant adds, people have a strong need to reveal themselves to others “even with no ulterior purpose.”³⁹ Communicating “our whole self” and “complete communion” are the goals of disposition friendship, quite apart from any other effects that friendship produces.⁴⁰ Kant’s friendship of disposition or fellowship permits friends to unburden themselves, to be frank, to escape contempt, and to achieve complete communion.⁴¹ The term *intimacy* seems to be the most accurate shorthand expression to describe Kant’s second ideal conception of friendship.

Kant’s intimacy friends believe that they can trust each other with their most personal thoughts, touching upon their ideas, opinions, feelings, hopes, fears, aspirations, doubts, loves, and hates. The complete communion that Kant sees as one goal of intimacy friendship is not communion in the sense of total accord or identity of beliefs but communion in the sense of friends being open and receptive to each other’s feelings, hopes, views, aspirations, and so on. Not that each friend would accept the other’s ideas without criticism or suggestion. Intimacy friends could offer suggestions, criticism, and assistance; they are more than passive, spongelike receptors. They are willing to regard each other’s thoughts sympathetically and compassionately, treating each other’s thoughts with the same respect that they would want for their own. Intimacy friends do not expect automatic agreement with everything that they believe or feel; rather, they want sympathetic assistance in evaluating and correcting feelings and judgments. Intimate friends encourage each other to openly discuss each other’s concerns.

In their discussion of friendship, Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett overlook Kant’s point about intimacy friends reaching accord and communion.⁴² Kant has more than merely “sharing secrets” in mind as constituting a friendship of intimacy. Reaching communion, understood as being receptive to each other’s beliefs, feelings, and aspirations, also is a part of Kant’s intimacy friendship. Cocking and Kennett are correct at least that sharing secrets is something patients and therapists do, even though there is no friendship between them, though, for example, a therapist who shared too many of his intimacies might transgress the boundary of professionalism, and if there was a high degree of sharing, one might suppose that a friendship was beginning. Kant’s idea of

reaching communion closely approximates Cocking's and Kennett's idea about friends being "responsive to the direction and interpretation of one another."⁴³

Kant does not expect intimacy friends to spend many hours together. The salient aspect of intimacy friendship is that each knows that the other is trustworthy and reliably willing to receive his or her confidences. Some interval of time is initially required to establish and cement the friend's trust. Learning that another is willing to play the role of a trustworthy confidant is not possible at first. Many false starts and mistakes in judgment about who is reliable most likely will occur. Nevertheless, after an initial, time-consuming period of testing and probation, Kant's intimacy friendship does not require that friends spend much time together monitoring each other. If their mutual feeling of trust can be maintained over time without seeing much of each other, their friendship can be sustained over long periods of absence.

Laurence Thomas argues that "the extent to which a person is willing to reveal to us private information is the most significant measure we can have of that person's willingness to trust us, where the trust in question implies considerably more than that the person takes us to be of unquestionable moral character."⁴⁴ In Thomas's view, people signal each other that they want to be friends by seeing if the other reciprocates, through revealing his own intimate thoughts, as a sign that there can be trust between them. Thomas differs from Kant in that intimacy and openness are only the first stages in initiating friendship and are not constitutive components of the friendship itself. Thomas notes that it is not clear to what degree this ritual signaling is culturally determined, or to what degree it is part of the nature of friendship.⁴⁵

Kant's intimacy friends, in contrast to Aristotle's virtue friends, are not expected to assist each other or to spend entire lives with each other. Since the object of intimacy friendship is a disposition to openness and a receptivity of each other's confidences, friends would not expect other mutually engaged in activities. Intimacy friends would not expect to go to football games together, to go skiing together, or to play long chess games with each other. Engaging in these kinds of activities may not be conducive to exchanging intimacies that require the friends to pay attention to each other and to not become engrossed in external diversions. Each friend expects that the other would be available when needed to receive confidences, to listen to problems or other inner-directed thoughts and feelings, but at the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, each friend would be reluctant to burden the other with his own inner pains and problems. For Kant, what is most important is knowing that one's friend would be willing to sympathetically listen, not that he or she frequently listens.

Intimacy friends do not provide each other with services, nor do they count on each other to provide the necessities of life. Friends are not a mutual insurance policy or a close-at-hand crutch in time of need. Kant calls such friendships “need friendship,” which is a less-than-ideal form of friendship.⁴⁶ Merely knowing that another is willing to share intimacies suffices to ameliorate feelings of isolation and hostility. The benefits of true friendship for Kant are first that “Friendship . . . is an aid in overcoming the constraint and the distrust man feels in his intercourse with others, by revealing himself without reserve,”⁴⁷ and second that “it is man’s refuge in this world from his distrust of his fellows, in which he can reveal his disposition to another and enter into communion with him.”⁴⁸ Actual deeds are not required. A perfect intimacy friend’s character, for Kant, is composed of “uprightness of disposition, sincerity, trustworthiness, conduct devoid of all falsehood and spite, and a sweet, cheerful and happy temper.”⁴⁹ These elements are not character traits of someone specially positioned to be helpful in times of need (e.g., someone who is readily available, resourceful, wealthy, and generous). They are, however, precisely the character traits of someone in whom confidences can be safely placed.

In Vigilantius’s reporting of Kant’s lectures on *The Metaphysics of Morals*, five rules of prudence for establishing a perfect friendship are listed:

1. Not to burden our friend with our requirements. This lies quite beyond the bounds of friendship. It is far better to bear evils willingly than to demand relief from them.

2. Intimacy in the mutual disclosure of thoughts calls for *caution*, i.e., that we open our mind to the other only so far that we do not run the risk of thereby forfeiting his respect, by the standard of his judgement and the degree of his practical prudence.

3. In the colloquy and enjoyment of friendship, every degree of modesty, or likewise of delicacy, is needed, in regard to the other’s personal self-esteem. . . . If such censure [of moral faults] can be effected without loss of respect, it does not clash with the impulse to friendship, but much caution is needed for this and it always remains a gamble. So that, too, is a duty.

4. To keep sufficiently at a distance from our friend, that the respect which in all circumstances we owe to his personhood is in no way infringed thereby. This happens primarily by incautiously obtruding our goodwill, by rash communication, and by unrestrained love. Too deep an intimacy detracts from worth.

5. It is prudent to engage in a reciprocal development of our principles, and above all to track down those on which we have a need to decide with our friend whether there may be any misunderstandings that hinder agreement.⁵⁰ (emphasis in original)

There is something distinctly modern about Kant's intimacy friendship. Friendship understood as intimacy, according to Hanna Arendt, "conforms so well to the basic attitude of the modern individual, who in his alienation from the world can truly reveal himself only in privacy and in the intimacy of face-to-face encounters."⁵¹ Intimacy friends do not have to see each other very often to engage in mutual activities, nor do they have to live close by each other to be available for mutual assistance. Just as long as each knows that the other would be willing to listen and share confidences, then friendship can remain vital and alive. Kant even insists that intimacy friends do not even have to have similar interests. So even if the friends' characters change and they develop divergent interests (e.g., sailing and softball), as long as they remain sincere, trustworthy, and free from falsehood, they could maintain an intimate friendship. They could still count on each other to provide release and communion. Intimacy requires nothing more. It is not as though intimate friends need to know a great deal about the private life of the other. They do not need daily or weekly briefings on the other's mental states.

There is a sense where confidants who frequently or constantly exchange personal thoughts might be considered intimate with each other, while Kant's intimacy friends might not be considered intimate. Constant confidants could have the most in-depth and current information about each other, while Kant's intimacy friends might not. Lack of depth does not undermine Kant's sense of intimacy. While Kant's sense of intimacy has to do with communion between persons and their possessing some knowledge of each other, it need not imply completeness, depth, or breadth of knowledge. Being familiar with someone does imply a great deal of knowledge, but it is possible to be intimate without being familiar. Kant's intimacy friendships are based on the supposition that friends can trust each other with their personal thoughts, and it is such a trust between them that creates the closeness that warrants calling the relationship "intimate."

Intimacy friendships are modern because friends are not required, as are Aristotle's virtue friends, to spend most of their lives together engaging in joint activities. Intimacy friendships, as a result, may be better able to withstand the vagaries of modern life, where friends frequently move from place to place because of school, jobs, or spouses. Intimacy friends do not need to converse regularly with each other or share activities and interests, as do virtue friends. Only a brief time together is required to maintain the friendship. Unlike Aristotle's nonworking, aristocratic virtue friends, busy people with jobs, school, and family can remain friends. They only need to know that their

friend remains sincere, trustworthy, and free from falsehood. Intimacy friendship, in Kant's sense, can withstand these modern strains of living.

Because it is not constituted by impossible to detect or maintain equality of love and respect, Kant's intimacy or moral friendship is a possible ideal of friendship. Intimacy friendship does not require acts of beneficence or assistance that undermine equality between friends. Moreover, the behavior constituting intimacy friendship is not the kind of behavior that the categorical imperative requires for all rational beings. No categorical moral requirement exists that people be intimate with one another. While intimacy may be a valuable and laudatory way to relate to others, it is not a moral requirement that is owed to all (or to anyone, for that matter). Thus moral or intimacy friendship fulfills one of the defining characteristics of friendship, that it is a special relation not expected to be shared with everyone. In this important way, intimacy friendship differs from Kant's other ideal of friendship, which requires equal respect, thus only mirroring the behavior that Kant believes is morally owed to all rational beings. Friendship characterized on that other basis is simply equivalent to morally correct behavior. And while it is most certainly true that many conceptions of friendship expect friends to behave toward each other in a morally exemplary way, friendship is not reducible to morally exemplary behavior, especially a morality requiring all persons to be regarded in some basically equal or impersonal way. Friendship, in both conception and practice, is partial and particular.

If intimacy friends do not have to spend a great deal of time together or frequently talk to each other, what prevents people from having many intimacy friends, or even, in the extreme, from being intimate with everyone? If having a great number of friends were possible, supposing Kant's intimacy conception of friendship, then that fact would be a good reason to question whether his intimacy conception is a reasonable understanding of friendship. Intimacy friendship makes only minimal demands on each friend's time, energy, and material resources. Any limitation on those assets is not what keeps the number of possible intimacy friends small, that is, once intimacy is established. Discovering another who is capable of "uprightness of disposition, sincerity, trustworthiness, conduct devoid of all falsehood and spite, and a sweet, cheerful, and happy temper" necessary for intimacy friendship consumes great time and assets. The kind of reciprocal testing that Laurence Thomas discusses, where each potential friend exchanges intimacies of gradually increasing sensitivity to discover the other's trustworthiness, cannot happen quickly or effortlessly. Expenses in discovering intimacy friends are

significant factors limiting the number of friends, not the resources and expenses in keeping them. So while maintaining intimacy friendships with a large number might be possible, becoming intimacy friends with many is difficult, time consuming, and expensive.⁵²

Intimacy friendship is unlikely to conflict with any moral demands of Kant's categorical imperative. How friends behave toward each other (i.e., being willing to receive each other's confidences) is not likely to place either friend in a position where she would have to act contrary to the categorical imperative. None of the duties prescribed by the categorical imperative—refraining from lying and from suicide, helping others, and perfecting one's virtue—could conflict with the requirements of intimacy friendship—the willingness to be open, trusting, sincere, and free from falsehood. Showing preference for friends over others by being willing to receive their confidences while not receiving confidences from nonfriends cannot conflict with the categorical imperative. As Kant understands this possible ideal friendship, no moral opposition is possible between acting with preference toward one's friend, as required by the intimacy conception of friendship, and acting toward others in a morally exemplary way, as required by the categorical imperative. No moral opposition arises between a willingness to receive confidences and any perfect moral duty. Neither is there any possible conflict between receiving confidences from one's friend and imperfect duties, unless being willing to receive confidences interferes with one's imperfect duty to help nonfriends.

The value of intimacy friendship to friends depends on the value of their being able to find release through disclosing their personal thoughts. One way that release occurs is that intimacy friends meet and disclose their thoughts to each other. Friends do not, however, actually have to meet. According to Kant, knowing that they could disclose their thoughts to each other can suffice for the existence of intimacy friendship. Possession of that knowledge might constitute the friendship's entire value. When friends do actually disclose their intimate thoughts, it might have instrumental value, insofar as they can assist each other in correcting ideas when they are mistaken. If this were the only or primary value of friendship, then intimacy friendship's value would be primarily instrumental and only one among many devices for truth seeking or certification. Were this intimacy friendship's value, then it would be difficult to see the difference between this ideal friendship and the instrumentally useful need friendship that Kant believes exists originally and in primitive circumstances. Moreover, if the disclosure of personal thoughts, quite apart from any correction of erroneous beliefs, has value primarily as a release

of some discomfiting psychological pressure of a burdened heart then, again, the value of intimacy friendship to the friends appears to be primarily instrumental. It is a way of removing unpleasant psychological discomfort. Not all of its value need be negative. Intimacy friendship could produce positive, though still instrumental, value through pleasures arising from having someone with whom to confide one's thoughts and ideas.

Intimacy friendship need not be rationally undertaken as a means of achieving anything. Intimacy friendship arises not from our reason. Its source, as Kant says, is "a strong impulse to disclose ourselves, and enter wholly into fellowship."⁵³ Our strong impulses and inclinations give rise to friendship. Though Kant never discusses this issue, it would appear that intimacy friendship is not an essential part of our rational nature. It depends on conditional aspects of our phenomenal, empirical nature. Were humans to lack strong psychological impulses to disclose thoughts, little impetus for intimacy friendship would exist, because humans would have no need for disclosure or for entering into fellowship. According to Kant, inclination has no principles underlying it, thus impulses to disclosure and fellowship might be absent from some individuals who would therefore have no purpose for friends.

Kant's unattainable ideal of friendship, equal love and respect, is not grounded in inclination but arises from our reason. Love and respect are demands of our practical reason as revealed by the categorical imperative. This ideal is unattainable not as a result of the actions required by the friends but, according to Kant, because of the impossibility of discovering the equality of love and respect (just like the impossibility that Kant thinks exists in discovering one's true motives of action). There is no impossibility in everyone acting with love and respect to all. In fact, Kant believes that this is just what morality demands. But universal love and respect is not friendship, because it is universal, not special and particular.

OTHER IDEALS OF FRIENDSHIP

There are three other ideals of friendship that I briefly will mention in this chapter, because they illustrate additional dimensions in the range of friendship ideals that differ from Aristotle's and Kant's. The first to be discussed is that of C. S. Lewis, who defends a strongly interest-based friendship. Montaigne is the second, championing a friendship based on affection. Lastly, to fill out the introduction in greater contrast are ideals of friendship between unequals that originated in India.

C. S. Lewis thinks that two or more people who share some strong, passionate interest in something will become friends:

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden).⁵⁴

Lewis conceives of friendship as shared activities focusing on common interests or quests after some truth. He makes several forceful contrasts between sharing interests and sharing intimacies or affection:

The very condition of having Friends is that we should want something else besides Friends. Where the truthful answer to the question *Do you see the same truth?* would be "I see nothing and I don't care about the truth; I only want a Friend," no Friendship can arise—though Affection of course may. There would be nothing for the Friendship to be *about*; and Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice.⁵⁵ (emphasis in original)

Lewis distinguishes friendship from relations of affection or love that are not based on shared interests but on a shared concern for each other:

Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever about their Friendship. Lovers are normally *face to face*, absorbed in each other; Friends, *side by side*, absorbed in some common interest.⁵⁶ (emphasis added)

Friends, for Lewis, share interests and external pursuits in the activities of their friendship; they do not share intimacies or sit around discussing their thoughts about each other. Friends want to spend time together, perhaps as much as their lives will allow, pursuing shared interests in much the same way that Aristotle's friends share lives of virtuous activity. Friendship concerns something exterior to friends, some object or interest they care about and wish to achieve together. The interior, the personal, are not primary concerns in friendship:

For of course we do not want to know our Friend's affairs at all. Friendship, unlike Eros, is uninquisitive. You become a man's friend without knowing or caring whether he is married or single or how he earns his living. What have all these "unconcerning things, matters of fact" to do with the real question, *Do you see the same truth?* . . . No one cares twopence about any one else's family, profession, class, income, race, or previous history. Of course you will get to know about most of these in the end. But casually.⁵⁷

In Lewis's conception of friendship, friends may not care for "the person" if this is understood to mean that friendship focuses on the inner or emotional characteristics of friends that are unessential to any shared interest. This is not to say, however, that a friend is cared for only instrumentally as a means to something else, or that a friend is not cared for because of who he is. A friend is cared for because of what Lewis would consider an important part of the friend's character, the consuming enthusiasm for a shared interest or truth. To this extent, Lewis's conception of friendship resembles Aristotle's character friendship based on virtue. Their two conceptions also are similar, because the common quest, for Lewis, expands and augments each friend's abilities to engage in shared interests in much the same way that Aristotle believes character friends help each other become virtuous.

Montaigne, following an inspiration from Cicero, conceives of friendship as a "perfect union and harmony."⁵⁸ Cicero, however, limits complete union and harmony in friendship to "agreement in aims, ambitions, and attitudes,"⁵⁹ or "sympathy in all matters of importance, plus goodwill and affection."⁶⁰ Montaigne goes well beyond Cicero, considering friendship "the complete fusion of our wills."⁶¹ Montaigne continues:

In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I love him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I.

Beyond all my understanding, beyond what I can say about this in particular, there was I know not what inexplicable and fateful force that was the mediator of this union.⁶²

Montaigne's felicitous choice of the word "fusion" to describe this ideal friendship makes clear the extreme degree to which friends are united compared to ideal friendships of other philosophers. Friends, as Lewis conceives them, are united in their pursuit of interests or truths but still remain separate in many other aspects of their lives. There might be a union of trust and intimacy among friends, as Kant understands friendship, but Kant thinks that friends differ in many ways, only needing to agree on moral principles. Aristotle's ideal friendship requires only an equality in virtue, not complete identity. Montaigne goes the farthest, claiming that friends will entirely lose their individual identities:

It is not one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand: it is I know not what quintessence of all this mixture, which, having seized my whole will, led it to plunge and lose itself in his; which having seized

his whole will, led it to plunge and lose itself in mine, with equal hunger, equal rivalry. I say lose, in truth, for neither of us reserved anything for himself, nor was anything either his or mine.⁶³

None of the other philosophers considers friendship an identity losing fusion. For many contemporary and feminist philosophers, a correct analysis of friendship must be able to explain how each friend maintains her identity within the friendship.

Montaigne agrees with Aristotle and Kant in thinking that the best form of friendship is valued for its own sake and not “forged and nourished by pleasure or profit, by public or private needs . . . and the less friendships, insofar as they mix into friendship another cause and object and reward than friendship itself.”⁶⁴ It is clear that Montaigne believes that fusion friendship is valued intrinsically. While no reason exists why friendship cannot have both intrinsic and extrinsic value, or be valued by friends both for its own sake and for other goods that it produces, Montaigne rejects this dual valuing:

In this noble relationship, services and benefits, on which other friendships feed, do not even deserve to be taken into account . . . and banish from between them these words of separation and distinction: benefit, obligation, gratitude, and the like.⁶⁵

This issue, of the kinds of value that friendship has, shall be a recurring theme throughout the remaining chapters of this book.

Montaigne’s fusion friendship illustrates an additional issue that will not only recur but that functions as one of the nonmoral differences that will be used to assess the relevance of various conceptions of friendship to our (Western) experience. Montaigne does not believe that it is possible to foretell who will become friends with whom:

If you press me to tell why I love him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I. Beyond all my understanding, beyond what I can say about this in particular, there was I know not what inexplicable and fateful force that was the mediator of this union.⁶⁶

No characteristics shared by diverse persons can ground predictions about whether or not they will become friends. To this extent, Montaigne agrees with Kant. In contrast, friendship, as understood by both Aristotle and Lewis, may permit fairly accurate predictions in theory about possible friends. To the extent that Aristotle’s best form of friendship is between persons of equal virtue, knowing that two people have the same virtue might

warrant predicting that they would become friends. In much the same way, assuming Lewis's conception of friendship, knowing that two people possess the same overriding interest or consuming passion for some "truth" also would warrant predicting their becoming friends if their common interests were discovered. These different implications about the possibility of predicting who becomes friends can function to test the relevance of each conception of friendship. To the extent that predicting who will become friends is possible, one set of conceptions is closer to our own experience than the other. More is said about this in later chapters.

There is an additional way that Montaigne's fusion ideal of friendship differs from Aristotle, Kant, and Lewis, showing a possible weakness in Montaigne's conception. Ideal friendships, according to Kant, Aristotle, and Lewis, are possible among more than two friends at a given time. Even though it is very time consuming to discover whether another can be sufficiently trustworthy to be an intimacy friend, as Kant understands his ideal of friendship, it is clearly possible for more than two to be friends. Having equal virtue is possible for more than two, so that, according to Aristotle's ideal, more than two can be friends at one time. Lewis's interest friendship is the ideal most easily shared by several friends who have similar interests. Montaigne believes that fusion friendship permits no "plurality of friends":

For this perfect friendship I speak of is indivisible: each one gives himself so wholly to his friend that he has nothing left to distribute elsewhere; on the contrary, he is sorry that he is not double, triple, or quadruple, and that he has not several souls and several wills to confer them all on this one object. Common friendships can be divided up: one may love in one man his beauty, in another his easygoing ways, in another liberality, in one paternal love, in another brotherly love, and so forth; but this friendship that possesses the soul and rules it with absolute sovereignty cannot possibly be double. If two called for help at the same time, which one would you run to? If they demanded conflicting services of you, how could [you] arrange it? If one confided to your silence a thing that would be useful for the other to know, how would you extricate yourself? A single dominant friendship dissolves all other obligations.⁶⁷

Despite Montaigne's arguments, there is no conceptual impossibility of more than two becoming friends. If the fusion is as complete as Montaigne maintains, "everything actually being in common between them—wills, thoughts, judgments, goods . . . life—and their relationship being that of one soul in two bodies,"⁶⁸ none of Montaigne's possible conflicts might arise. If the union were so complete, no reason could arise for demanding conflicting services. Three friends completely fused together would have no greater difference in thought,

diversity in judgment, or divergence in wills than two who are thoroughly fused. The likelihood exists less of finding three or four who could meet the prerequisites of fusion friendship; but if they could be completely fused, then few if any conflicts would arise. If more than one needed assistance at one time, there might be some conflict, but of course if there were more than two friends fused together, assistance for all might be easier to come by.

Bhikhu Parekh discusses three Indian ideals of friendship “that occur in the literature and are thought to cover most relationships of friendship.”⁶⁹ Unlike Western ideals of friendship, the Indian ideals are not between equals but between a “junior partner” and a “senior partner” who “is a little older, wiser, more mature, better informed about the ways of the world, and more resourceful.”⁷⁰

Before discussing the three different Indian ideals, some of the similarities between Indian friendship and the Western conceptions should be highlighted. An Indian friend “gives his heart” where the heart is considered the seat of both feelings and soul.⁷¹

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.⁷²

Emotional union between friends is “the closest possible.” According to Parekh, friends share a common soul or self and “feel as one.”⁷³ Unlike the fusion that Montaigne believes occurs between friends, which effaces any difference between them, Indian friends “reflect and manifest each other’s self, spirit, life-breath, or soul such that each discovers himself in the other.”⁷⁴ Much like Aristotle’s conception of reciprocal goodwill, Indian friends render useful services to each other and make sacrifices of time, money, and energy from a sense of good-heartedness. Also, Indian friends will joke with one another, be playful, and engage in amusing conversations and escapades, and sometimes will disregard social convention; but, as Parekh stresses, unlike in the West, “friendship is the only relationship in which these things are permitted, and those involved released from the stern demands of duty characteristic of other [Indian social] relationships.”⁷⁵

A number of additional similarities exist. Friends do not pose a threat to each other, and they can count on each other’s affection, support, and loyalty. And, like the Western understanding of loyalty, loyalty is distinguished from

flattery, so that Indians expect their friends to be a source of sincere advice and to function as each other's critic and conscience. Further, friends must be open and honest with each other, friends must not gossip about each other, and friends must not harm or demean each other to another.⁷⁶ Indian writers also share some of the same concerns as several Western writers about the darker side of friendship. According to Parekh, Indian writers are troubled by the requirement inherent in Indian friendship that a person may be expected to bend rules or violate moral norms to protect a friend in trouble, or that loyalty to a friend might require acquiescing in his misdeeds and even assisting him.⁷⁷ An illustration comes from the novel *Train to Pakistan*, by Khushwant Singh:

The Punjabi's code was even more baffling. For them, truth, honour, financial integrity were "all right," but these were placed lower down the scale of values than being true to one's salt, to one's friends and fellow villagers. For friends, you could lie in court or cheat, and no one would blame you. On the contrary, you became a *nar admi*—a he-man who had defied authority (magistrates and police) and religion (oath on the scripture) but proved true to friendship.⁷⁸

Cicero denies that friends should engage in immoral activities to assist each other, but that the temptation to do so is always present.⁷⁹ Indian writers also are troubled by the aspect of friendship that is common in Western thought and is the stimulus for this book. According to Parekh, "they were convinced that friendship, which necessarily involved partiality, was incompatible with justice . . . which involved an impartial application of rules and norms and an equal regard for the well-being of all."⁸⁰

The first of the three kinds of ideal Indian friendship that Parekh distinguishes "is based on genuine affection and fondness, usually built up during childhood and adolescence."⁸¹ This kind of friendship results from familiarity and unity produced by growing up together and sharing formative experiences. Indian writers believe that friendship formed through growing up together can survive many years of separation with little contact between the friends and the length of separation making little difference to the strength of friendship. Such friendship is not based on similarity of character, social status, power, interest, ideals, or goals.⁸² Friends' common upbringing forges a bond that creates and maintains their ability to trust each other and to share intimacies, even after years of separation, where their character or interests may have grown in divergent ways. Their childhood experiences continue to support the good-hearted feelings and deep care that they continue to feel for each other.

Early learning permanently forges adult character. An example is the friendship between Binoy-bhusan and Gourmohan in the novel *Gora*, by Rabindranath Tagore.⁸³ In Charles Dickens's novel *David Copperfield*, Copperfield's and Steerforth's friendship, forged while bonding at boarding school, could be a Western example of this first kind of Indian friendship.

Unlike the first kind of friendship, which is based on pure feeling, the second kind [of friendship] is based on mutual help and gratitude. Two individuals who render each other valuable services are placed under each other's debt. Such acts over a period of time create a relationship of shared mutual gratitude and pave the way for friendship. Although they have good feelings for each other, not the feelings but the accumulated weight of mutual assistance is the basis for their friendship.⁸⁴

Parekh points out that Indians consider a favor as a sign of goodwill and harm as a sign of hostility. A favor is a sign that a person wants to become one's friend, and it is intended to create a bond that has a deeper moral meaning. Future reciprocal favors are not so much repayments of debts but expressions of the developing friendship.⁸⁵ Clearly there are similarities between this Indian friendship and Aristotle's friendship, based on utility, and Kant's conception of primitive, need-based friendship. The similarities are more fully discussed in chapter 2.

In the third and highest form of Indian friendship, which is thought to be rare and divine, "friends . . . share common interests, values, ideals, and lifestyles, are totally at ease in each other's presence, and deeply love and trust each other."⁸⁶ Divine friends are practically one, though they retain sufficient individuality to avoid the total fusion that Montaigne values as an ideal. Divine or perfect Indian friendship differs from most Western conceptions of ideal friendship, because the friends are not equal. Even though the friends are totally devoted to each other and love each other equally, there is a senior partner and a junior partner. "Perfect friendship is only possible between individuals who share common interests, temperaments, values, and so on, but one of whom is a little older and wiser and a great source of strength."⁸⁷ Unequal relationships are believed to avoid traces of competition, jealousy, and comparison, which are deemed to be characteristic of relations between equals. Parekh uses examples of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as being typical of perfect friendship and friendships that sometimes arise between teachers and their former pupils. Aristotle's ideal friendship of equals in virtue contrasts with perfect Indian friendship.

There is a final item about Indian friendships that Parekh mentions, which I take note of here because it connects not only to different conceptions of friendship such as Kant's and Aristotle's but also to empirical studies of same-sex friendships, which I discuss in the next chapter. While in many respects Indian friendships between men and between women are alike, "female friendships are generally presented as more intimate, reliable, and durable, more easily made, and less self-conscious than those between men."⁸⁸ Parekh points out that the Indian term used to describe female friends involves mutual caring, fondness, support, and, above all, exchanging and keeping confidences.

A wide range exists in how friendship is conceived. While there are many similarities in the conceptions, for otherwise they would not all be recognizable as friendship, the various conceptions differ from each other along several different variables. In the next chapter, I explain those variables and elucidate both their interconnections and independencies.