



FRIENDSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF ARISTOTLE: REVISITED

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Abstract

I will examine the notion of the friendship of Aristotle, Kant and Gadamer in this paper, and endeavour to grasp the value of the Aristotelian model of friendship. Regarding the issue, I study diverse issues of the friendship of Aristotle and related issues of Kant and Gadamer such as various kinds of friendship, a general conception, different motives of friendship, the impacts of friendship in society etc. I want to show the Aristotelian notion of friendship, its different kinds, and relations in respect of many social positions etc. There are also analyses about the notion of Kant's various kinds of friendship, self-disclosure and complete union in friendship etc. Gadamer's different relationships, solidarity and self-love etc. captured my interest too. In concluding remarks, I elaborate on the richness of the Aristotelian idea of friendship.

Keywords Friendship · Virtue friendship · Reciprocity · Self-interest · Self-disclosure

Introduction

The aim of the ancient Greek philosophers was to give a happy life or eudaimonia life for the citizen of state. They also confirm that for living a eudaimonia life, one needs to live with his friends rather than strangers. They say that a happy man does not want a lonely life; rather he prays a happy life with his friends. Aristotle has given a philosophical discussion of friendship with a strong foundation in the philosophy of history. He gives importance to friendship by saying 'no one can would lived a life without friends even if he has all other goods'. There is a moral aspect in friendship which we cannot be ignored, as for him 'if there is friendly character, then there is no need any friendship and friendship is the highest kind of moral excellence'.

This paper mainly addresses the Aristotelian concept of friendship with the notion of Kant and Gadamer friendship. There are discussed Aristotle's different kinds of friendship, reciprocity relation and self-disclosure etc. In this same way, Kant and Gadamer's notion of friendship are also examined. In conclusion, I note down the richness of the friendship of Aristotle.

Aristotelian account of Friendship

In the philosophical study of friendship started at the hand of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greek. Socrates and Plato never tried to give any exact definition of friendship and they never divide it with any number, rather always they explore a general conception of friendship, its several forms, and the number of cause for which the friendship is building up. Of course, Plato's distinction and relation between the lover and the friend in his *Phaedrus* has a great contribution in the practice of friendship in philosophy. Aristotle who is the first philosopher in the context of philosophy of friendship divides friendship in three kinds and gives a definitional form of friendship.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives more space to friendship than to any other moral virtues; as for him if there is friendly character, there is no need any justice. This way, he formulates that friendship as a bridge between the moral virtues and the highest life of philosophy. He describes man as a political creature whose intension is to live with others; if the other is his friend than strangers then it would be

better. In general, the happy man wishes to live pleasantly. If the man is solitary, he is not able to continuously active; so he needs a person and if the person is his friend then it would be very easy for him to live pleasantly. A virtuous man wishes a virtuous person as his companion for living a wonderful pleasant life. At the early stage of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that for living good life, one strives for and attempts to achieve virtuous lived; for living a virtuous life, one needs virtuous friend. We can able to live a flourishing life only if we can capable to gather a virtuous friend by correct rational choice.

Aristotle proposes three objects of love and three corresponding types of friendship such as, utility, pleasure and virtue friendship. Utility and pleasure friendship depend on utility or pleasure which they gave from one to another. Utility friendship is building up basically at work place or between colleagues or batchmates. They love each other only for good will that they take from each other, they do not love each other for their character. In the same way, pleasure friendship demands the pleasure from one another. This kind of friendship sets up mainly among young people. The friends of pleasure friendship are bonding merely for the pleasure, even they build up friendship with bad people in this concern. They live under the guidance of emotion and what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them. But increasing their age, they take pleasant from different things. They fall in love and out from love very quickly.

The friendship of virtue is very different from the utility and the pleasure friendship of Aristotle. Virtue friendship is the only one type of friendship which building up without any utility or pleasure basis, it sets up by the only character of the friend. The virtue friendship which is also called as the perfect friendship is building up between the good persons who are good in their character. They help each other without any feedback basis, they wish good for each other for their character without any external affairs. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* mentions the virtue friendship is that type of friendship where the all qualities of a good friendship met at a point. He states that for building up such type of friendship, spending time together is an important point. The utility and pleasure friendship, even bad man can be friend for the fulfilment of utility or pleasure. But the friendship of virtue is different one from these two, as the friendship of virtue is only building up between those who are good in their character for not any incidental quality rather they are good for their character.

In a mutual advantage friendship, the friends are feeling advantages from each other, in respective that, a friend can also be concerned for other in their friendship and that creates another space in the discussion of friendship. Actually, a friendship is what type that depend what they valued in their friendship. While a friendship is based on utility and pleasure basis then these are utility and pleasure friendship respectively. But when a friendship sets up between the persons who are good in their character and both practice the virtue in their friendship then it is the perfect or the virtue type of friendship.

Aristotle represents another type of friendship which is based on mutual goodness. He addresses such type of friendship by phrases as such 'the friendship of people who are good and alike in virtue' or 'the friendship of good persons' (Cooper, 2013: 624). He confirms this type of friendship is only the unique type of friendship where all kinds of characteristic of a perfect type of friendship meet in a point. He says that for building up such type of friendship, the friends need to be good in their character and intellectually strong. He also confirms that the mixture of good and bad character people are unable to set up such kind of friendship.

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, gave the definition of friendship and says, it is actually a reciprocal well wishing. Among the three kinds of friendship, he states that there are present a proportion among these friendships. Two kinds of reciprocation of Aristotelian concept of friendship has a strong impacts on friendship, these are 'reciprocation as exchange and dependence' and 'reciprocation as correspondence'. In the case of correspondence reciprocity, the relation between them is simple pairing or matching. In that reciprocity relation, the acknowledgement of goodwill is paired or corresponds to each other, there is no exchange as such and they are independent on each other. On the other hand, exchange is thicker than correspondence and dependence a further thickening of exchange. Exchange without dependence is illustrated in gift-giving (Smith & Romero-Iribas, 2019: 7). In the thicker sense, reciprocation contacts with dependence.

In virtue, generally all treat equally with each other. But in the case of love and friendship, it does not maintain. In these relationship, is not equal rather it is unequal such as the relationship between father and son, between the rulers and the subjects. There is many reasons by which a friendship can be set up, among them equality and likeness to each other is more significant. Likeness and good character in friendship is basically shown in virtue friendship, as they friends of virtue are good in their character and so they like each other automatically. The good friend does well for him as well as for his friends and they never do anything wrong and never let to do wrong to his friends. Utility and pleasure friendship is lasting

since they take utility or pleasure from each other because, their likeness is end up with their utility or pleasure what they get from each other in their friendship. The wicked men maintain their friendship for a short time, as they know each other wickedness. The friendship of utility mainly exists between the contraries relation such as the bond between the rich and poor, learned and ignorant.

Reciprocity relation of Aristotelian friendship influences the others form of community. Particular kind of friendship correspond a particular type of community viz. comrades and fellow citizens set up distinguish type of community. In parallel way, different kind of community belongs to the different types of justice. According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of constitution such as, monarchy, aristocracy and polity in the ancient Greek. Each of the constitution involved with friendship and different constitution build up different types of friendship. Here, he discusses various forms of friendship between relations too. He also maintains the principles to be observed in friendship between equals and unequals.

In Aristotle's account, as a social creature, a person cultivates a relation with others and friendship is integrated with human happiness. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, he states that we want to live well at the same time, we want to recognize our living well. In his words, 'self-perception and self-knowledge is most desirable to everyone' (Veltman, 2004: 227). For him, we have a degree of objectivity in a relation to others, that's why, he claimed that for achieving the knowledge of ourselves, we need to see the work of our friends. He said that our friends are alike ourselves i.e. character of good and if we contemplate ourselves with others then we can gain knowledge about ourselves by seeing the work of our friends. For this cause, he claimed that we need friends like ourselves for gaining self-knowledge. Of course, for accepting the character friendship, self-knowledge argument faces a paradox. If we accept a character friendship for achieving self-knowledge, the question is how do we know about our character friendship, actually can he able to contemplate our character, and is he like ourselves? As well, for contemplating with our friendship, firstly at least we need a basic knowledge about ourselves, otherwise how could we choose a friend like our character. So, we are unable to rely on the mirroring dimension of friendship to accomplish self-knowledge.

Is it confirm that the friendship with good character always closely alike to each other? It is not. The good character person can cultivate their friendship with good person, but it is also true that the good character people also cultivated their friendship with whom they closely resemble. In that case, knowing each other in their friendship does not enable self-knowledge. Aristotle, in *Eudemian Ethics* notes that we gains some of our characteristic by contemplating one friend and other characteristics by contemplating other friends as groups of friends share salient characteristics with each other, in order to secure self-knowledge. He also states that character friendship enables us to achieve self-knowledge and by virtuous friendships, we can enjoy a blessed life.

In account of Aristotelian friendship, goodwill has a major position. He notes that goodwill seems to be the beginning of friendship, but for building up friendship only goodwill is not enough state of affairs. It is impossible to be friend of each other without knowing each other, but there can be present goodwill for each other. Actually, for set up a beautiful relation like friendship, knowing and spending time together is very crucial and goodwill for each other could be between two persons in general and it is also present in friendship too. In this concern, Kant has a great contribution. For him, even goodwill is not a friendly feeling. In friendly feeling, the friends spend with each other for a long time, whereas goodwill is an inherent characteristic. Even we wish good for our competitor and there is lack of pure love, we love him superficially. But the love for our friend is very pure and heartily and we love to spend time with our friend, so automatically there arises an intimate relation with our friends. One might by extension of the term *friendship* say that goodwill is inactive friendship (Aristotle, 2009: 170).

Critical Exploration

The journey of friendship commences in ancient Greek through the hand of Plato in speaking of Socrates. Aristotle who first time profoundly discusses about friendship in the history of friendship, after that it goes through the discussion of many great philosophers in the stream of time. Aristotle considers *philia* (friendship) as an essential component of 'the good life': in friendship, friends love 'the lovable, and this is good, pleasant, or useful' []. He considers friendship as a relation where the friends have goodwill and well wishes to one another. In his account of friendship, Aristotle defined not about 'philia' (friendship), but to *philein*. In addition, he also states that a *philos* is one who loves another and wishes to back; and they have believed in their relation of belief. Then they constitute a subset of those who love and who know that their love is reciprocated. Aristotle gives an account of friendship in such a way. Kant defines friendship as such: 'Friendship as an association of two persons through equal and mutual love and respect' (Paton, 1993:136). In his definition of friendship, Kant says that it is an association based on equal and mutual love for each other. But in Aristotelian friendship, it is not exactly like that. Aristotle also confirms mutual love for each

other, but it can be equal as well as unequal such as the friendship between the son and the parents. There can be another aspect i.e. Aristotelian utility and pleasure friendship is based on mutual love for one another, the virtue friendship forms another picture. In a virtue friendship, the friends love each other for their good character, not for what they got from each other. The friends of virtue, love one another for their character, not for any accidental quality.

Since Aristotle confirms three kinds of objects of love and as a consequence, he admits three kinds of friendship. Kant, in *Metaphysics of Morals* explains that friendship is the combination of feeling and action towards each other in a friendship, he calls 'humanity'- a unique characteristic of a man who is a rational being as well as an animal endowed with reason. The friends of such type of humane friendship are connected to each other through moral goodwill. This kind of friendship may not be the reason for all types of happiness in our life, yet it is the cause of worthiness to be happy and so it is regarded as a duty. Kant tries to give the same position direct or indirect to the complete friendship and the Aristotelian perfect type of friendship- such kind of friendship where the friends catch up their relation based on their good character, not on utility or pleasure and but carries with it both pleasure and utility. In *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant admits like the three kinds of friendship of Aristotle such as friendship based on need, friendship based on taste and friendship based on moral attitudes. Kant defined perfect friendship, he goes on at once to warn us that it is merely an Idea-an ideal which, although morally obligatory, is unattainable in practice: our duty is only to strive towards it as the maximum of mutual love and respect (Paton, 1993:140).

Gadamer accepts three kinds of relationships. The first one is with oneself or between parts of the soul, known as self-love and it is the precondition of friendship as well. The Second kind of relation covers the reciprocity relation between persons based on mutual interest, utility or pleasantness. Life-together, the third type of relationship is the highest kind of organization of communal human life. In the context of self-love, Aristotle says like Gadamer. Aristotle states that self-love has a positive connotation that makes one close to the self-sufficiency or autarchy of a divine model. It also solves the conflict between reason and passion; and achieves the unity between the two parts of the soul – the rational and the irrational. This way, we first experience the reconciliation between oneself, after that it transcends to others. So if one is not united with oneself, it would be problematic to live with others, leading Gadamer to state 'friendship must exist first and foremost with oneself' (Gadamer, 2009: 8).

According to Immanuel Kant, friendship has an ethical obligation as it belongs to the sphere of laws of internal freedom. He admits friendship is more than virtue and duty, and we know always duty is towards others, not for ourselves. For Kant, there are two kinds of ethical duties towards others, viz. First, duties of *love*, such as kindness, gratitude, sympathy; and Second, duties of *respect*, such as the avoidance of arrogance, backbiting, and mockery. But friendship is far unique from these because in friendship, love and respect both are present and combined on an equal footing. In this concern, Aristotle also states that friendship is the highest kind of moral virtue, he adds, if there is friendly character, then there is no require any justice and friendship is the highest category of moral excellence. This way, both of them give the importance of friendship in the case of virtue.

For Gadamer, the basic structural feature of any kind of friendship is reciprocity (Makurova, 2016: 152). He differentiates between friendship and friendliness. The reciprocal relation is also present in friendliness, but it lacks openness towards each other. There can be goodwill or sympathy for one another, but it is not enough for building up friendship. Aristotle also confirms the role of reciprocity in friendship, saying that it is a reciprocal well wishing and admits two kinds of reciprocity named 'reciprocation as exchange and dependence' and 'reciprocation as correspondence'. Aristotelian reciprocity relation in friendship is more complicated than Gadamer's account. There is many degree of reciprocation in Aristotelian notion of reciprocity viz. exchange is thicker than correspondence, dependence a further thickening of exchange. Exchange without dependence is illustrated in gift-giving (Smith & Romero-Iribas, 2019: 7). In the thicker sense, reciprocation contacts with dependence. Aristotle also said like Gadamer that goodwill is not sufficient condition for building up friendship such as wish goodwill for our competitor; friendship demands spending time together as well. One might by extension of the term *friendship* say that goodwill is inactive friendship (Aristotle, 2009: 170).

We cannot ignore the significance of self-disclosure in friendship for patching up a relationship between friends. Aristotle and Kant, both of them agreed that the highest types of friendship is mere possible through the mutual knowing to one another. This is only possible while one come to know another and spend a good time with each other. For Kant, the highest kind of friendship permits friends to jointly know each other without any benefit, where in Aristotle's account of friendship, by the self-disclosure to one another, we achieve the knowledge of ourselves. Kant bewares us about the misuse of our self-revealing to others, Aristotle notes that the trust develops by spending time together in sharing activities. In *Lecture*

on *Friendship*, Kant, the end of moral friendship is not reveal to another, rather achieves the ‘complete union’ with other by self-disclosing, that is truly intrinsic good for Kant. There is devoid of any kind of inherent value of self- disclosing for Aristotle, he gives more importance to the trustworthiness of friends which is superior to Kant’s view, where Kant devotes little attention to earning trust.

Conclusion

There are many dilemmas in the context of friendship viz. trust of friends, misuse self- revealing etc.; yet if one can realize its inherent worth, it could be a blessing for him. There are various similarities and dissimilarities in views on friendship in the span of distinguished philosophers. But it is common for all that it is a unique relation by which we can live a blessed and wonderful life, even we can say without it we are unable to live pleasantly. In general, a good human being wants to live happily and healthily with his closest dear one and friendship is one such type of relation where two different people come and like each other for living with one another without any blood or marital relationship. They, basically the people of good character desire to be friends, that’s itself a virtue. The great philosopher Jacques Derrida told for supporting the friendship of good people, for him, ‘O my friend, there is no friend’ - saying the dying sage. A virtuous person wishes to build up friendship as it is a virtue itself as well as if one wants to live a virtuous, happy life, he needs a virtuous one. While one goes for virtuous friend, he transcends himself to reach the other (virtuous person), so one goes beyond his ego for wishing good for another. In that case, the other could be stranger, refugee and even from another nation.

As we know that the practice of friendship started with the contribution of Aristotle and he gave a lot about friendship. The virtue friendship of Aristotle is regarded as the great notion in the history of friendship. Kant says about complete union which is also nearer to Aristotelian virtue friendship where the friends build up their friendship through moral goodwill. Gadamer’s life together is depending on self-love, which is also discussed by Aristotle in his account of friendship. These are some documents that proved that Aristotle’s concept of friendship is not just the begging of the discussion of friendship as well as it has richness in the history of friendship. Aristotle also states about self-disclosure in friendship and for building up a relationship like friendship, it could play a vital role. In this context, Kant says that we disclose ourselves to other even though we are aware of the misuse of our self-revealing.

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