

more together than they would have been alone, more *themselves* together than they would have been alone. I appreciate my friend as the unique individual she is and am made more myself, a better myself, than I would have been without her. Again we return to this overworked word: love is a way of knowing, perhaps better, *the way* of knowing, for among other things it is receptivity to the love-ly as such. Again, this is an insight which, despite two millennia of Christianity and an even longer period before that of Judaism, has yet to be truly encountered by most philosophers.

Eros is even more exclusive than friendship, and yet is more engaging of the person who is loved. It is, of course, notoriously easy to confuse *eros* with its counterfeit, lust, and the word "erotic" is used as a synonym for "pornographic". But superficial sexual encounters do not constitute *eros*, and a lifestyle which consists of such encounters banishes it. *Eros* only becomes itself when it is a form of friendship, that is, when it is the deepest kind of intimacy which can occur between two people, one whose depth is proved by its exclusivity. This is why I assert the view that *eros* is most itself in the lifetime exclusive commitment to another which is marriage.

Eros, as Plato realised, is *for* beauty. Beauty, however, is the shining forth of this individual as the unique individual he, she, or it is, where that uniqueness appears as to be loved, to be treasured, to be guarded, ultimately evoking exclusive devotion. It is easy to see how it could have become a path for the ascending mind for Plato; for many things and in different ways can claim us exclusively: my wife can do so, but so can philosophy itself, as can truth. In this way, *eros* is not a simple or univocal phenomenon, and can have, as it does in Plato, a universal application. Its plurivocal universality and its exclusiveness render it paradoxical.

Thus we begin to see how the forms of love interact, what differentiates and what unites them. Their interrelation is far from static, and they seem to enjoy a protean nature, ever changing, yet remaining the same. It is indeed in this dynamic interplay, not merely in thought but in lived reality, that the excellence of the good life chiefly consists.

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Personal Friends

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Think of the strange feeling of receiving from your electricity company a computer-printed bill for €785,000, signing off "with love". The inappropriateness would have an uncanny resonance: the piles and files, drawers and columns, paragraphs, graphs and computers must have gone haywire for you to receive such a weird message — how could they possibly address you "with love"? The expression is entirely out of place. If I persist in accepting it, a certain discomfort, bordering on spiritual disgust, takes me over.

Why? Is it that love is not possible?

No. The disgust felt by trying to imagine a computer as the origin of love stems from mistaking the possible object of friendship. It is because love and friendship are *possible*, that disgust is felt when I associate anything with love which cannot be a friend, because it cannot be another self. The other, *my* other, is a kind of interpretation or explanation of me, in the same way as a mirror image reflects the original. A computer system, for example, or a dog, reflects me only partially. Were I to take them for all I am, I would be disgusted with myself.

Yet, these images *do* reflect parts of me — parts, however, which, like a distorted and refracted mirror image, must be interpreted and explained with reference to the full and integral original. In the same manner, all my relations must be understood and explained in relation to the fundamental one — the mutual relation of selves in friendship. For a friend is not only, as Aristotle says, another self, the friend is also, as Hegel says, the truth about my self.

To regard oneself as explained in a computer or to understand oneself at the level of a dog are different ways in which we can betray the humanity of the self. These forms of identification are explainable, however, as distortions and reflections of the fundamental relation of friendship. All distortions and all reflections distort and

reflect essential features, and they are all like the original in some way or other. When we choose our friends, we look for the features we take to be essential in ourselves — so much so that without the friend we have no mirror to discover who we are. With, and in, the friend we have much more than a mirror, we have another self.

If we look for ourselves in the computer, we will, through our imaginative ability to put ourselves in the place of another, find our selves under the guise of a machine. We will consider ourselves expendable and judge according to efficacy. Mistaking our "other" for a machine is self-reification. The efficacy characteristic of bureaucracy, which requires that civil servants act as instruments, achieves this: for the good of society, but to the detriment of the person. The systematic reification of community, through the requirement of non-decision-making efficacy inherent in bureaucracy, leaves us with files and piles, drawers and columns, paragraphs, graphs and computers. A necessary evil in a good society, but as Bauman has shown, necessarily evil in a bad one.

If we identify with the dog, the needs of which are to be fed and housed, and whose appetite turns it into an innocent aggressor and consumer of other animals, we would see ourselves as beasts to whom humans are a foreign species and simply a potential meal. We *can* identify thus. But can we do so "with love"?

In the following reflections I wish to show how the distorted images of the economic relation and of acquaintance can be interpreted and explained in the light of the friend as another self. I also want to show that neither of these relationships reflects satisfactory images of the self, and therefore points with the necessity of desire towards true friendship as their explanation and foundation.

The terms "economic relation" and "acquaintance" are inspired by Aristotle. He talks about three types of *philia*, distinguished by the object common to, or exchanged by, the friends: usefulness, pleasure and the good. For a modern reader it is easy to think of the ethos of the first and second kinds of friendship as respectively utilitarian and hedonistic. Utilitarianism conceptualises the human being as an efficient utility-maximiser, whereas hedonism sees the point of communal living in satisfaction or pleasure. Their accounts of the self can best be understood and explained from within the dialectics of personal identity rooted in both, the only dynamic principle of which is

the slight displeasure felt in addressing or being addressed "with love" by something other than a self.

1. The Economic Relation

In the marketplace — at the butcher's, as well as on the stock market — people interact to agree on the price and payment of a transaction. This interaction is made possible by the mechanisms of offer and demand, as well as by the local *ethos* of exchange. Some people are more familiar with the rules followed at the butcher's, others rise to the challenge of those of the stock market. The game is one of exchange, and the rules are, to some extent, made up as we go along, and are indeed more or less agreed to by the parties. In economies where money plays a minor role, the game is played in *mutualia* or in services rendered. The exchange of favours, appointments or privileges can all form part of a "gift-economy" even to the point of corruption. Cicero could describe the "obligations" of this form of exchange-friendship in his *De officiis*. But he had to distance himself from this very common form of social interaction to be able to describe true friendship in the *De amicitia*.

1.1. Use

To be an individual in a society implies that one's knowledge of oneself is moulded, if not constituted, by others — by the image they reflect when they look at us. If someone is regarded as a productive industrialist or as an efficient businessperson, he or she is seen in the light of what is produced in an economic relation, and how she or he is able to respond to some acknowledged needs. We thus recognise ourselves to a large extent in the part of our activity that relates to what can be bought and sold. We identify easily as a butcher, a stockbroker or a doctor, and accept that others identify us thus. But as usefulness varies with offer and demand, it depends on market forces what goods and services can be sold and bought. Therefore, we need to be more than just a "something" in the eyes of others, we need to be a "better something". We compete for prestige to be the first one considered when something is on offer or something must be

bought. Aristotle regards the deal in the economic relation as depending on the equation of two proportions (see *Nic. Eth.* V): on the one hand, the goods to be exchanged and the prestige of the person who offers them and, on the other, the goods exchanged for and the prestige of the person who possesses them. To him, both objects and persons have their value negotiated in the price-determining mechanism. This is the seriousness of the economic relation, and its relative stability can be observed wherever inequalities persist. Slavery, in fact, is the extreme form or consequence of this price-determining mechanism. A man could, in antiquity, sell himself and his household into slavery to pay off a debt. The slave would thus have his personal value annulled, and therefore not be in a position to act legally or to proceed to any financial transactions. He could thus become a (non-) person whose life, body, abilities and work were used to pay for his debt. Criminals, foreigners and "natural slaves" were accorded the same status, filling the need for mental labour so keenly felt in pre-industrial times.

When societies and individuals identify persons with their usefulness in relation to social or personal projects, they regard their identity as being dependent on these same projects. The businessman and the civil servant are, in other words, appreciated in their instrumentality. It is, however, only possible partially to recognise oneself as a means. The one who identifies fully within the economic relation conceives his self only as a thing. Whether in the slave or in the businessman, this identification provokes the discomfort of the disgust with self.

1.2. Need

Another failure of the economic relation to create a genuine personal identity has to do with the tension between need and the ideal of self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency — the *autarkeia* of the Greeks — reflects the unity of the self, its independence and self-reliance. It embodies the freedom and capacity for originating actions and experiences. There is a kind of necessity in the self to understand itself in terms of this self-reliance, if not as a reality, then at least as an ideal. This necessity is challenged by the neediness of the self, which, in extreme dependence, seems to be destructive of the very sense of self.

To the Greeks the ideal of *autarkeia* was just as important as *autonomy* is for the moderns of today. The two can even be understood as differing formulations of the same ideal of the independence of the self, whether realised in private or in public relations. To be dependent (on slaves or patrons, cooks or investors) was and is a circumstance discreetly hidden. A relationship established with the purpose of amending the neediness of the self reflects us only as needy, dependent, incomplete and imperfect. It does not reflect us as a source of action and experience. Nor does it reflect us as self-reliant. Therefore there must be more to the self than what is reflected in the economic relation.

2. Acquaintance

There also are acquaintances. They come, for example, for dinner, and you take their visit as an occasion to change into evening dress. An exotic meal has been prepared with great diligence, the happy face put on and the problems shelved. The party has been carefully chosen so as not to embarrass anyone. The enjoyment of the evening will be perfect.

Society has often been ridiculed for all its conventions and taboos. It can only bear so much; beyond that limit, scandal awaits. When the surface cracks, society fails, and nobody expects it to endure. When economy, health or morality crumble, acquaintances turn away and are found to be merely accidental relations. They are there as long as it is agreeable, and for the sake of pleasure.

Sometimes, perhaps because of acquaintance's greater kinship with real friendship, we are scandalised by the speed with which acquaintances can disappear. We are less likely to notice when we ourselves "disappear." In fact we don't disappear. It just happens that our previous acquaintances are no longer "good company," and we seek out others with whom to enjoy life.

But when we ourselves are no longer "good company" we feel disappointed and hurt. We feel deceived when we discover that the acquaintance did not appreciate us, but merely our pleasant company. The regret may be so painful that we come to long for the clearer rules of buying and selling. Yet even money cannot buy what

we enjoyed in the acquaintance — it cannot buy the sharing of pleasure for pleasure's sake.

2.1. *Pleasure*

Different philosophers — Epicurus, Aquinas, Bentham and Nietzsche, for example — agree that pleasure is a good, even if perhaps not *the* good. Pleasure, and the repose which is in it, is by no means an unimportant phenomenon in human life. It arises only at significant moments — indeed it makes these moments significant, and thus it actually signifies something. Much of our activity is motivated by it, and yet we cannot have it directly. Pleasure comes to us as a result or a side-effect of doing, or when we discover the richness of what we do spontaneously, such as seeing, breathing, feeling, thinking and being ourselves. We can artificially facilitate pleasure and rest — though only to a limited extent — by means of alcohol or drugs.

Maybe the Aristotelian tradition is right in considering pleasure to accompany the perfect activity of a faculty in relation to its proper object, and also in considering the perfect pleasure to accompany the perfect activity of the best ability in relation to the best object. Its presence would in this case indicate some kind of personal achievement. This could be the reason why pleasure means so much to us. It indicates "what we are good at" no less than "what is good," both for us and in itself. It therefore opens the future for us, as a path towards what should be, a path towards becoming wholly ourselves, becoming happy. In this sense, pleasure is a kind of window towards the perfect. As pleasure cannot be stored and one half kept for tomorrow, it is all the more miraculous that we can share it with another. The sharing of pleasure is the beginning of a shared understanding of the good, because pleasure indicates the perfect. Kant and Aristotle would agree with each other that pleasure, whether aesthetic-contemplative as in the case of Kant, or activity-related as in the case of Aristotle, is an element in our judgement of the finality of living things. To share pleasure is therefore something that brings the sharers very close to each other. They "see what makes the other tick," because they discover a shared motivation. They also touch, so to speak, each other's capacity for forming judgements about the finality of things, about the good. If they, for example, share the pleasure of listening to Irish

music, what they share is a particular way of perceiving the good. Common taste, indeed, while not quite amounting to a shared understanding of *the good* or of the finality of human life, nevertheless foregrounds such a common vision. This is so because, in making judgements of taste, we imply our entire outlook on the world. A pleasure may shrink to distaste if we learn that the music was composed in order to keep alive a rebellion against our ancestors. We may never again be able to enjoy the music as long as we have not come to terms with this piece of information. What this illustrates is that there is no such a thing as a purely aesthetic judgement.

To enjoy and to be disgusted by the same things is a source of unanimity between people, a union far more intimate than that of the relative equality of the economic relation. This is because acquaintances share the beginnings of a common world-view in their spontaneous enjoyment, as they share the pleasures that are at the basis of their judgements of finality and the good. The partners in an economic transaction may well share an understanding of the reality of the world, but it is an understanding of the necessity of things and of their use, perhaps forced upon them within the relation, and only accidentally associated with pleasure. Of course the good businessman enjoys what he is doing, and he may enjoy the company of other good businessmen. Yet what they enjoy in each other's company is not the transaction itself, but the pleasure of making a good one. They mix business with pleasure — a piece of advice to be taken by anyone who wants to do something well.

2.2. *Dependence*

However, if what is shared by the acquaintances is pleasure, the relationship will be just as unstable as the economic relation, because it is just as dependent on external factors as the economic relation is. As pleasure cannot be *had* directly, but only as an accompaniment, as a surplus: the sharers of pleasure do not command what they have in common; they do not master it, or decide on it. In fact, physiological pleasure diminishes by sheer habituation, in the same way as the eyes adapt to the light. If all that is held in common is the experience of physiological pleasure, it will tend to wear away with habituation, or tend to demand more or new kinds of pleasures.

All kinds of addiction are rooted in this phenomenon. Morphine, alcohol, nicotine, sex and work can all create their specific kind of psycho-biological dependence, when they gradually wean body and soul away from the training needed for preserving mental and physiological balance. These substances and activities induce a specific kind of pleasure, to which the body generally adapts and thus requires still more to obtain again what was once had. They may thus gradually deform the personality, leaving it bound to strive for fulfillment in a direction where fulfillment is only to be obtained by creating a yet more severe craving. Addictive substances or activities create a hole in the soul through which it may indeed lose itself.

Even friendship can be addictive in this way — or rather, a shared, but immature, outlook on the world can be addictive. It leaves the friends very snug and undisturbed in their common understanding of the world, until tragedy of some kind strikes — death, madness, cruelty, illness, bankruptcy. Augustine in the *Confessions* recalls a friend he had in his youth who shared his Manichean world-view, and with whom time, life and soul were shared in intimacy and the joy of youth, to the point where his “soul could not be without him.” When the friend died, Augustine found himself hit by severe depression, which was not quite grief. It held in it the symptoms of deprivation, but not quite the deep affection and goodwill for the other person’s own sake which is characteristic both of grief and of true friendship. In his deprived and depressed confusion Augustine realised that he had been like a suckling in relation to his friend, he had made himself “dependent on a mere mortal as if he should never die,” and “poured out his soul into the sand.” Grief would have had the consolation of love, but deprivation of an addictive substance holds none aside from the hardship of unaccustomed sobriety.

Liberation from addiction can demand sometimes superhuman efforts, and can only have lasting effects if the person regards the dearly conquered freedom as a good, which ensures him or her a higher degree of humanity and a more humane way of enjoyment.

On the other hand, the acceptance of some degree of dependence may enable us to reach a higher degree of autonomy, or to remain self-possessed. This is obvious in the case of the person accepting anaesthetics at the dentist. The respect for the taboos inherent in the acquaintance-relation also sets us free to enjoy an evening out,

despite the limits imposed in this comparatively superficial level of intimacy. This respect can even be characterised as a specific kind of virtue, namely that of discretion. It consists in a certain kind of familiarity with the other and with the limits of intimacy.

Analogously, all kinds of virtue may be seen as ways of dealing with dependence, so that the self preserves its self-reliance and does not lose itself in something of inferior value. The gift of self, on the other hand, which demands the ultimate self-command and the ultimate judgement to discern the other self to whom the self may be given without degradation, is *ipso facto* the end of all virtue. It is friendship that makes sense of virtue, as virtue is required to make friendship possible beyond mutual dependence.

3. Friendship

What makes fair the bargain between people bargaining, and what makes company enjoyable among people enjoying themselves, is what foreshadows, and sometimes awakens the nostalgia for, a deeper and more fulfilling relationship — a relationship where the self can know itself as something endowed with more or other than the usefulness of a computer, and where it is not forced to depend upon, or feed a dependence in, the merciless hierarchy of a pack of hounds. The failures of the economic relation and of acquaintance, when one is “no use” and not “good company,” reveal to the failing party a desire that has not yet been met: the desire of recognising oneself in another beyond use and pleasure. Only the friend — or the longing for a friend — will make me conceive of myself as something more than a computer and something other than a dog. The meeting of a friend, which is conditioned by socio-economic and geographical factors as well as by time and character, does to some extent solve the existential quest for personal identity, or at least inaugurates it. For the meeting to be one of friends, the friends must will and acknowledge each other as friends, they must take the time it takes for each to reach the level of self-transcendence, self-giving, confidence and intimacy which is at the heart of friendship. To the self, another self is the best mirror, but to identify with another self, every other way of identifying, whether with the need of use or with the lust for pleasure, must yield and fall

away. The other self disguises itself in use and pleasure, but it has to be discovered to reflect the self as another self. It has to discover itself, and to discover you. But for it to be your friend, there is a condition: it must not identify you with the useful or with the pleasant, wherefore it must take care of its need by virtue, and of its dependence by self-transcendence. It must be a self: it must be self-reliant. Friendship cannot exist without this self-reliance, but it may patiently teach you.

3.1. *Self-Realisation*

Friendliness realised in the just bargain or in pleasant company has a mirror-quality or a tendency towards symmetry which we find unfolded fully only in real friendship. The generosity and accountability of the businessman or the charming character of the politician both make good conditions for exchange, as kindness is contagious. To resist friendliness with coldness or calculation demands a kind of effort to turn away from a natural *mimesis* of the other, in the same way as an effort is required to react with kindness to aggression.

The self-realisation in the mirror of the other has dimensions of space and time. In the friend the world is mirrored both as a common, meaningful space and as the common story of history. Friendships break in the same way as worlds break down and history disintegrates. What is held in common — in particular the knowledge of the self in the other and of the other in one's self — must be shared out just as the household is in a divorce.

Friendships may therefore be destroyed by the misjudging of the common space, in particular of the limits of the physical or psychological integrity of the selves involved. Violent, invasive, or brash behaviour all exemplify a lack of understanding of the personal space of the individual which is held in common with others. Friendship relies on a secure understanding of the personal space of the other, and it will degenerate into mutual dependence, addiction or even hatred if this is not observed.

Friendships may also be destroyed by serious disagreement about what "really happened" in their common story or history. Friends can agree to differ, and perhaps the better friends have the larger margin. But friendship is the place for truth, the place where truth is heard and where truth is spoken. Thus it is the place for the courage to ask

for it, as well as for the certainty that opposite things cannot be true about the same things at the same time. No matter how much tolerance may be good in society, in friendship there is only place for patience. This is because the hope for truth cannot be given up without giving up the friendship.

The friends' agreements about space and time tend towards their unity in soul and mind, which, for Augustine, means that if one turns away from "the One" and loses oneself in the chaos of the many, the unity of the friendship is also lost, and with it the friendship itself. Both Plotinus and Augustine were very sensitive to personal integrity being the condition *sine qua non* of true friendship. The same could be said of both Aristotle and Cicero, but the idea that the unity of the self is identical with the unity of the friendship is at home only in a Neoplatonic framework, where the only friendship that ultimately counts is that between the One and the soul.

Perhaps the post-modern insistence on difference adds a dimension to the ideal of the ancients, which was that of equality. Perhaps it has drawn our attention to another aspect of self-realisation — that it takes *another* to see oneself as another and indeed as a self. The mirror image reflected by the other is in fact better characterised as similitude than as equality. Our minds may well "function" in the same way, and life demand an equally all-encompassing effort from all of us. We may even be concerned with the same things and live a single life in common. But what is so beautiful in the knowledge we gain from reflecting together is that we are similar *originals*, not mere copies of one another. We gain much of our knowledge from drawing analogies, and analogies presuppose difference. But the identification of difference within the safe and demanding pact of friendship is just as difficult and just as demanding as the common acceptance of identity. We probably depend on the other for reflection to take place at all. The surprising difference in the other self may well be what opens up our self-understanding to a space which makes reflection possible and finds the self as relation, not only to the other, but also to itself. The surprise in connection with another type, another sex or another race thus contributes to, more than it hinders, the opening of the self to the dialectics of friendship. This is so precisely because the difference has to be overcome, and therefore pre-

vents friendship from passing for something less difficult than it in fact is.

3.2. *Autonomy*

Whereas, in the economic relation and in acquaintance, there is an acknowledgement of a mutual dependence, which cannot be cancelled without the relation being annulled, there is in genuine friendship a mutual dependence on a reciprocal setting-free. The United Nations in the 1990s invented the term "empowerment" to designate the way strong groups in society enable weaker groups to obtain or preserve autonomy, self-sufficiency or self-reliance, by means of just access to trade, education and credit. The older generation enables the younger generation to take charge of their biological and psychological dependence in the same way.

Likewise real friends empower each other with freedom. They prevent dependence and facilitate the self-reliance of the other. Because they do so, they tend towards being equal even when they are not. This empowerment to freedom can only last in friendship if it is done in radical mimetic symmetry, but it has the power of transcending even radical difference, because what is held in common is the self, the other and the world. Real friendship, therefore, both is and is not dependent on the equal autonomy or self-reliance of the friends. It is dependent on their equal will to empower the other with freedom. It is, of course, also dependent on knowing that we are more dependent on biological, psychological and spiritual factors beyond our control than we generally care to admit. Only the fool would mistake the discretion with which we treat our dependence for the indifference of total independence. The friend knows the weight of needs, and therefore enjoys fulfilling them, whether they belong to the self or to the self of the other. The supreme joy of the friend is to empower the other self to be self-reliant and self-giving: in this happiness not only consists, but in it, it is also contemplated.

3.3. *Truth*

The unity of real friendship tends towards a deeper correspondence, a more common community of life and history, than the unions pre-

sent in the economic relation or in acquaintance. Will we come closer to what we call truth than in this relationship, where need and pleasure are not allowed to infect or infect trust, intimacy and autonomy? Will the very dynamics of common life and experience reinforce the urge towards a just understanding, a right answer and a true attitude? Of course, there is no guarantee that the truth found in genuine friendship will be the Truth. But it seems guaranteed that the best place to seek it is here. It is no use working closely with a good physicist to establish a series of parameters for some enterprise, if you cannot trust that he will share with you the answers he believes to be correct according to his science. You may choose to make sure that he shares these results for money (thus establishing an economic relation) or calculate that he will do so because he enjoys the kind of work (and would not enjoy it as much without your collaboration). But you are better off if you know that he counts on you as you count on him, and that he would not let the possibility enter his mind that he could tell you something he believed to be untrue.

True friendship is also the one relation that opens the world as it really is. Under the pressure of oppression only references to reality exist: here you will only find "hard realities" — not reality itself. These are, like the empty corridors and endless offices in the novels of Kafka, still a kind of reality, but a distorted one, where the self cannot find a home. In friendship the self can be reconciled with the world as it really is, because what matters here is neither use nor pleasure. Here the self is afforded a priority in relation to the world, which sets it free from arbitrary standards. In friendship the self finds a home because it finds itself in the other.

The peculiar disgust related to identifying oneself as a computer or as a dog stems from the possibility of acquiring a foreign identity. It relates to the possibility of making oneself unrecognisable to another self, of dehumanising oneself and losing through one's own fault the possibility of being found by others. It is related to the knowledge that one is engaged in destroying the self, the image of the other and the openness of a common world. This, of course, can be seen only from the fixed point provided by friendship. The efficient business-woman or the sex addict may indeed believe themselves accomplished, and only now and then catch the smell of disgust. Their engagement — our engagement — turns us away from the selves we

are not, that is to say, turns us away from things that are not selves, preventing identification with them by disgust, and encourages identification as a self by being a friend to friends.

3.4. *Love*

Friendship cannot merely consist in the economic relation or in acquaintance. Both are too superficial and do not enable the self to identify as another self, as they reduce the self to its useful or pleasant dimensions. Neither are they the relations of a self-reliant self: the self of the economic relation is a mere dependent, and that of acquaintance merely a supervening pleasure at risk of carving out an addiction.

In the socially constructed world of piles and files, drawers and columns, paragraphs, graphs and computers — which exists in the world of many an understaffed telephone company — friendship, even in its most distorted forms, is the only refuge, fixed point, and hope of existence. More than a virtue, it is the meaning and point of virtue, and a way to freedom which is always open, in the midst of extreme poverty as well as in the cyclone of addiction. Its attractiveness is difficult to dismiss; indeed engaging in it will make you feel the disgust of identifying with something less than you are yourself. But it can be done: to do it forever is hell. The fragments of friendship, as well as the ideal, and finally, the real friendship, all reach us to go further and become ourselves as persons. To be a person is — to adopt here the definition of an anonymous Scholastic master — to be a subject distinguished by dignity. To become a person is to recognise in our selves something fundamental, like a principle, something that must count whatever the circumstances. Only real friendship teaches us this, as we learn to recognise the person in the other.

Then it is true that we wish and do the good for the sake of the friend alone, as we wish and do it for our own sake; that each friend wishes the life of the other, and wishes to share it. And it is true that the friend, like ourselves, accepts criticism, tells the truth, will be there for the length of a lifetime, does not slander, does not take offence, does not ask for something wrong to be said or done, and accepts that the relation be shared by others. Love, in fact, is

diffusive, and cannot be denied to another self without being affected in its entirety. I therefore cannot be unkind to someone without this also affecting my friend. The challenge of friendship thus has to be met every day anew, and whereas it may in fact be reserved to those whom you know by experience you can trust, it cannot be refused to anyone who shows himself or herself capable of it.

Therefore the friend is mild and does not envy; he does not boast or seek his own, he does not harbour anger or resentment. Neither does he rejoice in injustice, but exults in truth, as he believes everything, hopes everything, submits and stands up to everything, and does so always ... Does such a one really exist?

4. Does Friendship Exist?

Plato, Aristotle and Cicero were all reluctant to affirm the reality of friendship, because of the incomparable greatness of the ideal. Perhaps it takes some kind of faith to affirm its reality, or at least a hope that the disgust-blended feeling related to the economic relation and acquaintance is not the last word. If friendship did not exist, we could not come to conceive of ourselves as persons, in the sense of spiritual beings, which *must* count in any equation. Accepting this would be bleakness unending, perpetual disgust, eternal dissatisfaction. Then it is better to affirm the possibility of friendship. Moreover, indeed, friendships *do* exist. Not only are goods often exchanged for a just price, and the good company of a bunch of comrades enjoyed, but real friendship shines in the truth spoken to us and in the truth heard. It is very close at hand, indeed it is among us, and its nature guarantees that no one can be excluded from it unless he or she excludes himself or herself. Thus we are well off to have friendship! Indeed, we are rich, as rich as only the happy are. This is why I dare sign this paper "with love." Or a "sincerely yours" — it means the same.

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