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Love and Respect:
Virtue Friendship in Plato's *Phaedrus* and Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*

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*For my grandmothers,
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and their friends, Doris Calhoun and Kate Bertram,
who introduced me to philosophy,
and to friendship as a serious endeavor.*

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This paper argues, first, that, while philosophical treatments of friendship in the western tradition have typically taken Aristotle's account of virtue friendship as their starting point, we can already find, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, an account of friendship which comes close enough to Aristotle's in its most philosophically interesting features to be meaningfully called a virtue friendship, but with some intriguing differences, and that a close examination of this earlier account of Plato's has insights to offer us about both the moral significance of friendships of this kind, and, potentially, Plato's own philosophy. It then argues that another, perhaps even more overlooked, account of virtue friendship can be found in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, offering us a picture of the moral significance that this kind of friendship can have across very different ethical systems, and also, perhaps, an illuminating perspective from which to approach Kant's own conception of virtue.

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Preface:
Searching for Virtue Friendship

Most of us will be familiar, if we have an interest in the philosophy of friendship, with Aristotle's account of virtue friendship, or character friendship, in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, as the best kind of friendship between good people. This is an account which presents the best kind of friendship not only as intrinsically valuable, itself constituting a good and perhaps even a virtue, but also as immensely instrumentally valuable, to both of the friends, providing them not only with pleasure, but with a uniquely powerful asset to their practice and development of virtue. Though this account has been almost as widely criticized as it has been celebrated, much of the work on friendship in the western philosophical tradition has been either explicitly or implicitly guided by this understanding of friendship since Aristotle's own time. And there is good reason for this. There is something about the broad features of this account of friendship which strikes us immediately as appealing or plausible. It seems, to many of us, despite the problems scholars have long raised for the account, that Aristotle has managed to get something here importantly right, at least about one kind of friendship to which we might have reason to aspire. And, while many of the failings of the account might prove to be specifically Aristotle's own, many of its virtues seem, quite plausibly, to be ones which can have meaningful application far beyond a specifically Aristotelian context, in a broader understanding of the value of friendship, across a wide range of different ethical

systems. Since much of what is philosophically intriguing about the account, however, concerns its claims about the relationship between friendship and virtue, to examine the merits of this kind of account outside the context of a theory of virtue seems to lose something important. It seems potentially instructive, then, to look for how such an account of friendship, as virtue friendship, might find a home within the context of other prominent theories of virtue, as a start to the search for how it might find a home in our own understanding of a virtuous life.

In this paper I have set out, then, instead of looking again at Aristotle's own, much examined, account, to draw out what I take to be two alternative accounts of something still recognizable in all its most important features as virtue friendship, from the works of two other major theorists of virtue in the western philosophical tradition, Plato and Kant. Plato's account is of particular interest insofar as, if I am right that it comes to an account of virtue friendship, it predates Aristotle's own, much more recognized, development of these influential ideas. Kant's, while much later, and clearly much influenced by the philosophical tradition built upon Aristotle's account, is intriguing as a development of these same ideas within the context of what would, at least initially, appear to us to be a drastically different conception of virtue from either Plato's or Aristotle's own. And both of these accounts of virtue friendship, if I am correct that this is what they are, are ones which have been widely neglected. By neglecting them in this way, I believe, we have passed over the insights they might offer us not only into virtue friendship, but into the

two theories of virtue, more broadly, within which they are embedded, and this is an omission that deserves redressing.

The contrasts and commonalities between these two accounts of virtue friendship in particular, moreover, and between these two accounts and the much better known Aristotelian account to which we can compare them, serve to emphasize and help us to explore and illuminate how we might best understand two of the most intriguing ways in which it seems that virtue friendship can be instrumentally valuable, or beneficial, to the friends, across a wide range of conceptions of virtue and ethical theories. The first of these is the way in which this particular sort of relationship, with its combination of mutual love and respect with a deep mutual understanding and psychological intimacy, secure and justified trust, affinity of character, and shared moral convictions or values, might help us to acquire and refine our knowledge of ourselves, and, through this sort of knowledge of ourselves, to better pursue and practice virtue. This theme of self-knowledge within both accounts raises interesting questions about how our knowledge of ourselves is related both to our knowledge of others and their knowledge of us, and of how such knowledge relates not only to virtue directly, but to knowledge of virtue. This in turn points us towards the ways in which the same sorts of qualities within a friendship which might help us to come to better know our friends and ourselves might also help us to come to better know and understand virtue more abstractly, and what virtue might involve or require for someone like us. And this points us towards the second theme which these two accounts share with respect to the instrumental value of such

friendships: the ways in which such friendships might broaden the scope of our practice of virtue more directly, independently of their contributions to self-knowledge, both by providing us with new ways and opportunities to act virtuously, and by enhancing our ability to practice virtue successfully through collaborative action and the shared pursuit of joint activities and projects.

These two accounts seem to share, moreover, the intimation of a possible response to the worry that has often been raised in an Aristotelian context, that by valuing such instrumental contributions to our well-being, whether moral or otherwise, that such friendships might make, and valuing such friendships for these benefits they offers us, we somehow fail to adequately value the friend, or his well-being or happiness, for his 'own sake' in the way that we should, and thus fail to truly love, or adequately respect and value him as a person. Both Kant and Plato, it seems, have readily available to them the response that there is no immediate conflict between valuing someone for themselves, or their intrinsic qualities, or valuing their happiness or well-being 'for its own sake,' or for theirs, and valuing them also instrumentally, for the benefits they offer us. Plato would say, perhaps, that that which is valuable both for what it is and for what it produces is more valuable to us, not less, than that which is valuable only for itself or as an end, while Kant would say that there are both permissible and impermissible ways of treating that which must be valued as an end in itself also as a means, and only when the latter is allowed to interfere with the former has one generated a conflict. So long as we do not allow the value that we place upon the friendship's benefits to us to take precedence over

the value which we place upon the friend and his own well-being and happiness, it seems, then, both of these accounts direct us towards a way in which this worry about virtue friendships might be dissolved.

Through examining more closely these two widely neglected accounts of virtue friendship then, I hoped to find some insight into the nature of virtue friendship as a broader phenomenon, beyond the specific context of an Aristotelian ethics, and also, perhaps, along the way, into some of the less recognized features of the specific theories of virtue presented by Plato in his *Phaedrus* and Kant in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. I hoped to explore, moreover, through the comparison and counterposition of these two accounts, the themes of self-knowledge, and knowledge of virtue, and the relationship not only between these two, but between each of them and our knowledge of others, and their knowledge of us. Furthermore, I hoped to explore the links between all of these many types of knowledge and the active pursuit, and practice, of virtue. I can only hope that some part of this has been accomplished in the paper as it has actually come to exist, and that, if it has not, you may still, as a reader, find something worthwhile to yourself in exploring these two accounts of virtue friendship with me. I have certainly learned a very great deal in exploring them myself.

A Prayer For Me As Well:
Friendship and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*¹

¹ A version of this chapter was previously published as my Master's Report for the University of Texas at Austin, in 2014, under the title "A Prayer for Me As Well: Friendship and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*": <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/26365>

Introduction: The Philosophy of Friendship in Plato

Discussions of the philosophy of friendship almost always begin with Aristotle. Whether they intend to agree with him or not, most philosophers writing on friendship feel the need to take Aristotle's theory into account, as the first fully articulated theory of friendship in the western tradition, and to orient their own positions relative to his. Very few philosophers of friendship, however, feel obliged to address Plato's views. Those who do seem quite comfortable dismissing his theory of friendship as a half-formed subsidiary to his theory of erotic love, articulated poorly and with little commitment in the aporetic *Lysis*, and largely irrelevant to his vision of philosophy and of the good life on the whole.² I would like to argue that this perception of Plato is wrong. While Plato's views on friendship, or *philia*, are almost invariably found embedded in discussions of erotic love, I would nevertheless like to argue that these views constitute a clear and compelling picture of the value of friendship, of the best sort, in both our ordinary and philosophical lives. Moreover, I would like to suggest that these views of friendship present us with a somewhat surprising insight into Plato's overall conception of the practice of philosophy, as a personal process of striving for knowledge at the center of the best human life.

² See, e.g. Julia Annas. "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism." *Mind*, New Series, 86. 344 (Oct. 1977): 532-554. Hereafter, 'Annas.'

Annas does argue, however, and many seem to accept, that the aporetic 'problems' posed by Plato in the *Lysis* provide an important context for Aristotle's later account; See e.g. Jennifer Whiting. "The Nicomachean Account of *Philia*." *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. Richard Kraut. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.) 276-304. Hereafter, 'Whiting.'

In trying to tease out these views on *philia*, I would like to begin with a close reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*. As many have noted, this dialogue appears at first glance to be strangely disunified: its first half is concerned primarily with giving an account of erotic love, while its second half is devoted almost entirely to a discussion of the nature and value of rhetoric. I would like to begin by examining the theory of erotic love presented by Socrates in the 'palinode' at the center of the *Phaedrus*, and arguing that we can begin to see a theory of *philia* emerging from this account. I would then like to argue that a central element of this theory of *philia*, as presented in the palinode to love, provides us with a link to the later discussion of rhetoric, and a unifying theme for the *Phaedrus* as a whole, namely, the knowledge of souls. With this unifying theme in hand, we can then turn back to the account of *philia* and eros in the first half of the *Phaedrus* and, in light of this topic, draw further conclusions about Plato's views of the importance of *philia*, and eros, to philosophy.

I. Love and the Nature of the Soul

Socrates' palinode to love in the *Phaedrus* begins rather strangely with a defense of madness. Eros has been accused, in the preceding speeches criticizing love, of being a kind of madness, a madness which makes its victims lose their self-control and grip on reason, forgetting their own best interests and behaving erratically, even violently, towards both their beloved and others. Rather than rejecting this criticism outright, Socrates concedes that love is a kind of madness, but maintains that the important question is not this, but rather *what* kind of madness it is. While some kinds of madness

are admittedly harmful, he argues, others can be extremely beneficial, and even “god-sent.”³ Such beneficial kinds of madness, like prophetic trances and poetic inspiration, enable those whom they have “driven out of their minds”⁴ to achieve things far beyond what they are capable of when sane or “in control of themselves.”⁵ That love is a kind of madness, then, will stand as a meaningful criticism only if it isn’t a madness of such a beneficial kind. Socrates thus proposes to argue that love is a beneficial madness of just this sort. Love, he maintains, though it is a kind of madness, is a ‘divine’ kind of madness “sent by the gods as a benefit to a lover and his boy,”⁶ and to all of us “to ensure our greatest good fortune.”⁷

Already here, then, we are beginning to see what looks like a departure from the most familiar reading of the ‘ascent of love’ as outlined by Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*. To defend love we must not only show that it is of great benefit to the lover, but, apparently, that it is of *equally* great benefit to the beloved. Diotima’s account in the *Symposium* provides us with only the faintest of hints of how such a defense might be accomplished. In the palinode, however, to give such a defense is Socrates’ stated aim. And the picture of eros which he paints for us here begins not with a depiction of what the lover hopes to gain from his relationship with the beloved, as Diotima’s account

³ Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 245b2. Hereafter ‘*Phaedrus*.’

⁴ *Phaedrus* 245a7.

⁵ *Phaedrus* 244b4.

⁶ *Phaedrus* 245b7.

⁷ *Phaedrus* 245b8-c1.

arguably does,⁸ but with an abstract account of the nature of the human soul. Having outlined several ways in which a madness can be “god-sent”⁹ and beneficial, and declared his intention to defend love in this way, Socrates turns abruptly to a theory of the nature of the soul. If we are to defend love as a kind of divine and beneficial madness, he maintains, “we must first understand the truth about the nature of the soul, divine or human.... Here begins the proof.”¹⁰ But why should an account of the nature of the soul play such a central role in our defense of love? It seems that a significant part of Socrates’ answer will ultimately be that such an understanding of the nature of our souls is among the greatest benefits which love has to offer us, both in the role of lover and in the role of beloved. The benefits love offers to each party to an erotic relationship, then, are not differentiated in the way one might expect in traditional Greek homosexual practice, with the lover receiving certain benefits in exchange for very different benefits he offers the beloved. Rather, the beloved and the lover both benefit from the relationship in what is essentially the same way, although the historical development of the relationship is somewhat different for the beloved than the lover. Nevertheless, if the benefit to be expected by the beloved is the *same* as that accruing to the lover, then the claim that such a relationship provides the greatest benefit to *both* parties becomes much more straightforward to defend.

⁸ Plato. *Symposium*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 206a-b. Hereafter ‘*Symposium*.’

⁹ *Phaedrus* 245b2.

¹⁰ *Phaedrus* 245c1-2.

But to say all of this gets ahead of our argument. To establish these points, we need first to examine the account Socrates offers of the nature of the soul. The soul, first of all, is immortal.¹¹ As such, it pre-exists our birth into this world, in an un-embodied form. To accurately describe the nature of this un-embodied soul, however, would be nearly impossible, “a task for a god in every way,”¹² and so, Socrates suggests, we should attempt instead only to “say what it is like,”¹³ and illuminate its nature by analogy, since to do this “is humanly possible, and takes less time.”¹⁴ The account that he offers us, then, is an elaborate analogical myth, depicting the nature not only of the human soul, but of “all soul,”¹⁵ godly, human, and otherwise. Every soul, he argues, is like a chariot-team, composed of a charioteer and two horses, which are naturally and inseparably bound together into a single being, and held aloft in heaven by wings which spring from “every part” of it.¹⁶ The souls of the gods and of all other beings share this basic structure, and the central difference between the souls of the gods and those of other beings is in the natural character of the horses which the charioteer drives. In the souls of the gods both horses are naturally good and well-behaved, obedient to their charioteer and well-matched to one another. In the souls of other beings, however, only one of the horses is like those of the gods, while the other is naturally ill-tempered and unruly, prone

¹¹ *Phaedrus* 245c3.

¹² *Phaedrus* 246a3-4.

¹³ *Phaedrus* 246a4.

¹⁴ *Phaedrus* 246a2-4.

¹⁵ *Phaedrus* 246b2.

¹⁶ *Phaedrus* 246a5-6 & 251b7-8.

to disobey the charioteer and undermine the efforts of its teammate. It follows that while the souls of the gods move themselves through heaven with a natural ease and precision, “chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painful and difficult business,”¹⁷ even in this un-embodied form. Our un-embodied souls are nevertheless able to travel with the gods through the universe in an orderly procession, helping them to oversee the workings of the inanimate world.¹⁸ As each god has his own place in this heavenly procession, so does each soul, following in the ranks arrayed under the command of one of the gods as he tends to those parts of the universe which are his special concern. These un-embodied souls, both gods and otherwise, take their nourishment from the contemplation of what lies beyond the heavens which they oversee: the eternal and unchanging reality of “being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge.”¹⁹ Their sustenance, then, is the knowledge they gain from this vision of true reality, which can only be taken in by “intelligence, the soul’s steersman,”²⁰ that is, by the chariot driver. The divine procession of souls travels regularly up to the edge of the heavens to engage in this “banquet”²¹ of knowledge, and “when the soul has seen all the things that are as they are and feasted on them, it sinks back inside heaven and goes home.”²²

¹⁷ *Phaedrus* 246b4-5.

¹⁸ *Phaedrus* 246b7-c1 & 246e5-247a1.

¹⁹ *Phaedrus* 247c7-d1.

²⁰ *Phaedrus* 247d1.

²¹ *Phaedrus* 247b1.

²² *Phaedrus* 247e2-2-4.

However, this journey to the edge of heaven to feast on knowledge is a very different undertaking for the gods than for the souls of other sorts of beings, who are hindered in all of their motions by the unruliness of their bad horse. The way up to the edge of heaven is a steep and difficult incline, and while the gods navigate this challenge easily, with their skillful charioteers and disciplined horses, the rest of the souls struggle badly to reach the top and be able to see the real beings. The most successful souls, who have managed to make themselves most like the gods, are able to follow them close to the rim of heaven, and peer over the edge to see all of the real things beyond. In doing this, however, they are constantly distracted by the effort required to keep their horses under control, and so the view that they have is less perfect than that achieved by the gods. Other souls rise up and sink down erratically as their horses pull in different directions, affording brief views of only some of the real things passing by.²³ Still others are unable to reach the edge at all, struggling violently with themselves and others in a chaotic scramble to climb higher, but ultimately having to return to heaven unnourished by reality, and sustained only by “their own opinions.”²⁴ Since the wings of the soul are nourished by the “plain where truth stands,”²⁵ those who fail to reach the top fail to nourish their wings, and “many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage”²⁶ in the unsuccessful struggle to climb up. In

²³ The real things do not themselves move, rather, the rim of heaven spins, carrying the gods and successful souls past each of the real things successively (see *Phaedrus* 247c1-e4).

²⁴ *Phaedrus* 248b5.

²⁵ *Phaedrus* 248b6.

²⁶ *Phaedrus* 248b2-3.

this weakened state, the souls which return to heaven without having fed on reality are left vulnerable, and if any one of them “by some accident takes on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings, and falls to earth.”²⁷ Each soul in its first life is born into the body of a human being, with the souls who have seen more of reality born into those with better natural dispositions, while those who have seen less are born into those with less desirable natural characters. A soul who has seen the most will be born into someone disposed to become “a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love,”²⁸ while a soul who has seen the least will be born into someone with the disposition of a tyrant.²⁹ But all such human souls will at some point have seen something of the truth outside heaven, “since a human being must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity,”³⁰ and we gain this ability only through “the recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god.”³¹

All of our souls, then, have a natural desire to return to their original place in heaven, traveling with the gods. But to do so is extremely difficult. At the end of its mortal life, each soul is judged for its behavior while embodied, and receives rewards or punishments in the afterlife accordingly. But it is not able to return to its place with the gods in this afterlife, until it has regrown its wings. And to do this ordinarily takes a very

²⁷ *Phaedrus* 248c7-d1.

²⁸ *Phaedrus* 248d3-4.

²⁹ *Phaedrus* 248e5.

³⁰ *Phaedrus* 249b6-c2.

³¹ *Phaedrus* 249c3.

long time, at least ten lifetimes, or ten-thousand years. After a thousand years in the afterlife, each soul chooses another life to be born into on earth, and here each has a chance to change who it will be. The souls which had originally been born into one type of human being may choose to be born into a better or worse type, or even to be born into a non-human animal, if they prefer that sort of life to a human one. With each passing lifetime, then, each soul has a chance to better or worsen its condition, both in terms of the quality of the character with which it is born, and the choices it goes on to make during its lifetime.

And one of the most crucial of these choices, Plato argues, is the way in which we choose to respond to love, that is, to eros. Eros, he explains is that “kind of madness... which someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty...”³²

...then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so, and he gazes aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below – and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad. This is the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone who has it or is connected to it, and when someone who loves beautiful boys is touched by this madness he is called a lover.³³

Notice, then, that this description of eros does not seem to be restricted to those ‘who love beautiful boys,’ rather, the love of beautiful boys is plausibly interpreted as only one kind of such eros, that is, the kind with which we are most concerned here. This description of eros, then, seems entirely compatible with the many instances in which Plato speaks of eros as directed not only at persons, but at wisdom, the Forms,

³² *Phaedrus* 249d4-5.

³³ *Phaedrus* 249d5-e4.

philosophy, and many other things.³⁴ However, the focus in the palinode is not on eros in this general sense, but rather that specific sort of eros which is directed toward persons. Furthermore, beauty itself is not the *object* of this kind of eros, but rather the spark, so to speak, which touches it off.

II. The Lover Falls in Love

The process of falling in love, Plato argues, begins with the violent awe inspired in us by an encounter with physical beauty, but this is only the beginning of such eros, and a love which never moved beyond this stage would be a relatively shallow and unfruitful one. The objects which all human souls most naturally admire, he argues, are those perfectly real beings which all of us encountered at some time before our births. We must all remember these perfect beings to some extent or another, insofar as we are capable of understanding language.³⁵ Our recollection of these beings, however, is obscure and imperfect, and many of us have no conscious awareness of this recollection at all. Some of us, moreover, are less able to recollect these perfect beings than others, depending upon the experiences which our souls have had in the time before our births and since. Those who have seen more of reality, and who have done more to preserve their memories of what they did see, are better able to recall the nature of these perfect beings, recollecting them with both greater ease and greater clarity.³⁶ Some people, then,

³⁴ See, e.g., Plato. *Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) VI.490a7-b9, VI.499b4-c2, & VI.501d1. Hereafter '*Republic*'; Plato. *Gorgias*. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 481d2-6; *Symposium* 210d1-211d1.

³⁵ See above, p. 14.

³⁶ *Phaedrus* 249e4-250a6.

are easily reminded of these perfect beings by an encounter with “their images down here,”³⁷ while others are extremely difficult to move towards such a recollection. Beauty, however, enjoys a special status as a potential object of such recollection. The “likenesses”³⁸ which we encounter here on earth of the majority of perfect beings, such as wisdom³⁹ or justice, are not directly observable through our physical senses, but must to some extent be inferred from that which we immediately perceive.⁴⁰ The ‘likenesses’ of beauty, on the other hand, can be directly perceived through our senses, and, moreover, through “the clearest of our senses,”⁴¹ our sight. Unlike those things which might remind us of the other perfect beings, then, which require some careful attention and work to make out, a perception of beauty in the things ‘down here’ can come upon us unexpectedly, when we have not at all set out to look for it.

When some among the human souls ‘down here,’ then, in the course of their embodied human lives, are suddenly confronted with beauty in this way, taken off guard by an encounter with something which more closely resembles its perfect counterpart than any other thing which they are able to directly perceive, they are “startled,”⁴² and “beside themselves, and their experience is beyond their comprehension because they

³⁷ *Phaedrus* 250b2-3.

³⁸ *Phaedrus* 250b5.

³⁹ *Phaedrus* 250d3-7.

⁴⁰ *Phaedrus* 250b2-5.

⁴¹ *Phaedrus* 250d3.

⁴² *Phaedrus* 250a7.

cannot fully grasp what they are seeing.”⁴³ Then, as they attempt to make sense of what they are feeling, the course of the eros this encounter has sparked in them may turn several different ways, depending upon how they come to understand and respond to it. Someone who has forgotten much of the real things he saw, or who has obscured his memories of them even further through a life of vice, “is not to be moved abruptly from here to a vision of Beauty itself when he sees what we call beauty here,”⁴⁴ and so he is likely to interpret this powerful experience only as a physical lust or desire. Such a person consequently “surrenders to pleasure and sets out in the manner of a four-footed beast,”⁴⁵ pursuing sex without further reflection upon what has happened to him. Someone who is closer to his memories of true beauty, on the other hand, is struck by a mysterious “reverence”⁴⁶ for the possessor of this earthly beauty, as the experience reminds him of the things that he “felt at an earlier time,”⁴⁷ in the presence of Beauty itself. In the presence of this earthly reflection of beauty, the long-dormant roots of the wings of his soul begin to be nurtured again, as they were by the vision of true beauty in heaven, and “the soul seethes and throbs in this condition.... like a child whose teeth are just starting to grow in,”⁴⁸ as it begins to regain its wings. The only relief for this pain is to stay in the presence of the earthly beauty which began the process, and which

⁴³ *Phaedrus* 250a8-b1.

⁴⁴ *Phaedrus* 250e3.

⁴⁵ *Phaedrus* 250e5-6.

⁴⁶ *Phaedrus* 251a5.

⁴⁷ *Phaedrus* 251a4.

⁴⁸ *Phaedrus* 251b9-10.

nourishes the newly sprouting wings of the soul and eases the discomfort of their growth, replacing the maddening frustration of their struggle to grow with pleasure and joy at the soul's revitalization. And so this second sort of lover is desperate to remain near the object of his eros, but is still unsure of what it is that moves him to this desperation, and "this is the experience we humans call love."⁴⁹

But an eros which stopped here would still be one which brought little benefit, to either the lover or beloved. Though this unreflective experience of beauty is enough to begin the re-growth of the soul's wings, if the progress of the lover's eros went no further than this, then his soul would remain in this desperate and frustrated state, confused as to how its sudden need could be satisfied. As such a lover's eros draws him closer to the possessor of this beauty, however, while the soul's bad horse advocates that he interpret his need only as a desire for sex, he is "struck by the boy's face, as if by a bolt of lightning,"⁵⁰ and "when the charioteer sees that face, his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control."⁵¹ Awe-struck by this recollection of the perfect beings, the soul pulls up short in its pursuit of the beloved, restraining its bad horse in the realization that physical gratification is not the only thing it really wants. The lover now understands, instead, that his desire to be close to his beloved is caused by the way his beloved reminds him of the perfect beings he saw in heaven, and the way that his beloved's presence makes him feel

⁴⁹ *Phaedrus* 252b3.

⁵⁰ *Phaedrus* 254b5.

⁵¹ *Phaedrus* 254b5-8.

again the way that he once felt in the presence of those perfect beings, when he was still “pure”⁵² and “free of all troubles...and...gazed in rapture at sacred revealed objects that were perfect, and simple, and unshakable and blissful.”⁵³ Understanding his eros in this context, as a need which draws him closer to the ‘sacred’ world and self which he has lost, he is able to resist the pull of the bad horse to convert this desire into a simple physical lust, and to bring the bad horse gradually under control, fighting against its influence and teaching it the discipline to follow the commands of the charioteer. Eventually, when the bad horse in the soul “stops being so insolent”⁵⁴ in the face of the lover’s resistance to its impulses, and “is humble enough to follow the charioteer’s warnings,”⁵⁵ the lover is able to guide his soul’s response to eros in the way that he now understands to be most appropriate to the cause of these powerful feelings in himself, and “now at last the lover’s soul follows its boy in reverence and awe,”⁵⁶ without discomforted confusion, or dissension from the bad horse in the soul.

At this point, then, one might still plausibly interpret the object of this eros not as the beloved himself, but the beauty and perfection which the lover is reminded of by him. This changes, however, as the violent attraction which the lover has felt towards the beloved evolves from a unidirectional desire into a continuing relationship between the lover and beloved. Though the initial stage of eros which we have been describing might,

⁵² *Phaedrus* 250c5.

⁵³ *Phaedrus* 250c2-4.

⁵⁴ *Phaedrus* 254e7.

⁵⁵ *Phaedrus* 254e9-10.

⁵⁶ *Phaedrus* 254e9-10.

one imagines, strike a lover in the presence of any physically beautiful person, physical beauty alone will not be enough to sustain his desire to be near his beloved over time, once he has achieved this insight into what has caused his response to that beauty.

Though one might experience an intense desire of this sort for anyone beautiful, one does not necessarily come to love, in any more robust and lasting sense, any or every such person, and something beyond physical beauty alone must explain why this is. And this is because, Plato argues, “everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from among those who are beautiful,”⁵⁷ and this choice is not made on the basis of the beloved’s physical beauty, but on that of his character.

Although we have been focusing so far primarily upon the differences in character which result from the different experiences which each soul has had, and the different choices it has made, both before and after its birth, we should remember that Plato’s analogical myth picks out two distinct ways in which human souls might be differentiated into broad character types, and these two divisions run largely orthogonal to one another. One such division is in terms of the soul’s success in achieving a vision of the real beings outside of heaven, and in preserving its memories of what it has seen once it has been born into a life on earth. Where a given soul falls within this division may, Plato argues explicitly, change over time, as each soul chooses how to live its life, and what sort of life to be reborn to, gradually eroding or shoring up the memories it has of the truth. The other division, however, has to do with an aspect of each soul which does not change

⁵⁷ *Phaedrus* 252d5-e1.

after its birth into life here on earth: the particular god which that soul had attended in its travels through heaven before it was born. Recall that those souls who were most successful in achieving a vision of the real beings outside heaven were those who were able to make themselves most like the gods, emulating most perfectly the god whom they followed. A soul who will be born into the world with the best sort of character, then, that of ‘a lover of wisdom or of beauty’ or of an individual ‘cultivated in the arts’ or ‘prone to erotic love,’ will be “one that follows a god most closely, making itself most like that god”⁵⁸ during the time before its birth. But which god such a soul emulates in order to make itself most perfect will depend upon which god it follows in the heavenly procession. The path to its greatest perfection, then, may vary from soul to soul, depending upon which god each soul naturally follows, insofar as the division according to quality of character is made within the set of souls attendant upon each god, according to their success in emulating that god, rather than according to which god each soul attends. And this second sort of division among souls, Plato argues, will persist into our lives here on earth, at least insofar as our own forgetfulness and misguided choices fail to obscure it, so that “everyone spends his life honoring the god in whose chorus he danced, and emulates that god in every way he can, so long as he remains undefiled.”⁵⁹

When a lover turns from the immediate disorientation of an encounter with physical beauty, Plato argues, to the process of pursuing a lasting love with one among

⁵⁸ *Phaedrus* 248a1-2.

⁵⁹ *Phaedrus* 252d1-3.

those who possess such beauty, it is this second aspect of character which he turns his attention to in those around him. He searches, specifically, for a beloved whose character is like his own in terms of the god he once followed, that is, whose basic and unchanging character type is like his own, aside from its achievements in recalling the truth. He seeks out for his beloved, then, not the most accomplished soul, but a soul which displays the potential to develop itself in the way that he personally most admires, and to achieve that particular sort of greatest perfection after which he strives for himself. A ‘Zeus type’ soul, for example, as it strives to make itself more like Zeus, will also “choose someone to love who is a Zeus himself in the nobility of his soul,”⁶⁰ someone who “has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others,”⁶¹ and likewise for the souls who followed any of the other gods: “they take their god’s path and seek for their own a boy whose nature is like the god’s.”⁶² This nature, however, need only be a ‘talent’ or a disposition in the beloved, not yet a fully realized ability or virtue. The lover searches for a beloved who has the *capacity* to become the sort of man whom he himself most hopes to be, whether either of them have achieved much with respect to this goal yet or not. And since it is the natural hope of each soul to emulate its own god as perfectly as possible, and a beloved with such a disposition will himself be a soul who followed the same god as the lover, the lover is seeking out not only a beloved who shares a similar disposition to his own, but a

⁶⁰ *Phaedrus* 252e3-4.

⁶¹ *Phaedrus* 252e4-5.

⁶² *Phaedrus* 253b4-5.

beloved who shares the same aspirations, whether the beloved is yet aware of these aspirations in himself or not.

And once he has found such a beloved, the lover's driving aim is "to help him take on as much of their own god's qualities as possible,"⁶³ at least "so far as a human being can share a god's life."⁶⁴ And so, "once they have found him and are in love with him they do everything to develop that talent"⁶⁵ which first drew them to him in their search for a beloved. In order to do this, however, to help the beloved progress towards the realization of his potential to emulate their shared god, the lover himself must develop a better understanding of that god's true nature, and of his own, and his beloved's, natures and standings with respect to that god. He cannot effectively assist his beloved in achieving their shared goal, that is, without a working knowledge of what that goal is, and of how human beings like themselves might go about achieving it. And so, "if any lovers have not yet embarked on this practice," presumably, of deliberately seeking to emulate their god, "then they start to learn, using any source they can and also making progress on their own."⁶⁶ And the lover's ability to do this, to seek out a greater understanding of his god and himself with respect to that god, has been greatly augmented by his experience of love. Such lovers "are well equipped to track down their god's true nature with their own resources because of their driving need to gaze at the

⁶³ *Phaedrus* 253a6-b1.

⁶⁴ *Phaedrus* 253a3.

⁶⁵ *Phaedrus* 252e5-6.

⁶⁶ *Phaedrus* 252e6-8.

god, and as they are in touch with the god by memory they are inspired by him and adopt his customs and practices.... For all of this they know they have the boy to thank, and so they love him all the more.”⁶⁷

III. How Love Transforms the Lover

What, then, should we take to have happened to the lover in the course of this process of falling in love, as Plato has described it to us here? And how is it that the eros which he feels for his beloved has put him in a position to more effectively pursue his individual project of living a life as much as possible like that of his god, of reshaping his own soul in the image of the god whom he follows? The changes which Plato describes as taking place in the lover under the influence of love look at least partially epistemological, and partially motivational. Before this experience, it seems, the lover may well be entirely unaware of his recollections of the perfect beings and the experiences of his soul before his birth. The sudden confrontation with physical beauty, however, breaks his complacency in accepting the world around him as the one which is most certainly real, and about which he can most reliably know. In the course of his ordinary life, he has found himself confronted with a reaction in his soul which his knowledge of the everyday world cannot adequately explain. He is ultimately forced, then, if he has the self-awareness and perspective to recognize this reaction as something more than what can be accounted for completely by his animal needs, to look for an explanation of this power which beauty has over him in something beyond his

⁶⁷ *Phaedrus* 252e9-253a5.

experiences thus far in this world. He is forced to turn to a recollection of the true nature of Beauty in order to understand the disproportionate effect which the beauty in this world has had on him, if he is to escape the tortured confusion into which this experience has thrown his soul. And once he has been forced to confront his recollection of one of the perfect beings, he is no longer able to ignore such recollection, or to take it for granted, as he once did. When his mind is cast back, almost involuntarily, to his vision of true Beauty by the shock of proximity to the beauty which he has encountered here, he is also put in mind of the context in which he experienced this Beauty, of the other perfect beings which stood alongside it outside of heaven,⁶⁸ and of the state of his own soul as it was when he first experienced this vision. He experiences this vision of Beauty, and the intimation, at least, of some of its context, as something like a revelation, from which he cannot simply turn back to his previous way of life.

Having experienced this revelation of Beauty, however, what is it that moves the lover from his fascination with the physical beauty of the body which has caused this reaction, to the search for a beloved with a certain type of soul? Plato does not address this transition explicitly here in the *Phaedrus*, but we may imagine, from what he has said elsewhere, how this transformation in the focus of the lover's eros, from the physical to the spiritual or psychological, is meant to take place. True Beauty, Plato has argued elsewhere, is not best approximated in this world by the physical. Physical beauty is the most efficacious trigger for our recollection of true Beauty, because it is that aspect of

⁶⁸ Such as "Self-control," explicitly (*Phaedrus* 254b6-8).

beauty which is most easily accessible to us in this world, as something which can be directly perceived through the senses, without the assistance of a previously well-developed understanding of what beauty is. But once the lover has experienced his revelatory recollection of the true nature of beauty, he will realize that Beauty is approximated far more closely by “a soul that is beautiful and noble and well formed”⁶⁹ than it can be by anything physical, and that “the beauty of people’s souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies.”⁷⁰ Once he has realized this, the physical beauty of a human body will no longer be enough to satisfy his newfound need to be near that which is beautiful. He will be driven to seek out a kind of beauty which more closely approximates the true nature of beauty which he has come to understand, and this will require him to find a beloved who is beautiful in soul as well as body.

Why, then, does the lover not simply seek out the most actually beautiful soul which he can find to pursue as his beloved, rather than searching for a beloved who displays a certain sort of personality type or potential? It seems that this must have to do with some aspect of his experience outside of the insight which he has achieved into the nature of beauty specifically. Otherwise, his eros would carry him almost invariably towards the most already perfect soul he could find. And the most obviously relevant aspect of his experience of the recollection of Beauty, in this connection, is the state in which he now recalls his soul to have been at the time when he first encountered this

⁶⁹ *Symposium* 209b7.

⁷⁰ *Symposium* 210b7-8.

perfect being, providing him with a newfound insight into the nature of his own soul. The project towards which his revelation of Beauty directs him, then, is at least in part one of self-exploration and development. This vivid recollection of a perfect being beyond the physical world of his everyday experience has opened his eyes not only to the paucity of the 'reality' which he currently inhabits, but also to the fact that he himself, in his most pure form, is a denizen not of this physical world, but of the world of soul which he inhabited when he first encountered this perfect being. He has not only turned away from the physical and towards the psychological or spiritual in terms of his understanding of beauty, then, but also in his overall focus and prioritization, in his understanding of what is most important to and for himself. He now sees that his true self, that self with which he should be most concerned, is his soul, and that the experience and interests of this soul extend far beyond the concerns of his current embodied self. This new understanding must come with a corresponding shift in perspective as to what is most important to his own interests and satisfaction. And surely some part of the newfound strength which he gains to combat the 'bad horse' in his soul is the realization, through this revelation, however partial, of his own true nature, that a gratification of those sorts of desires will never be enough to bring his soul real satisfaction. What he most desires, he now realizes, is not to obtain or possess any given thing, but rather himself to *be* in a certain state, or *become* a certain sort of being. And he now perceives the particular type of eros which he is experiencing in the context of this new understanding of himself and his desires more generally.

But the sort of being which he now realizes that he most desires to be is not, importantly, one of the perfectly real beings themselves. The perfectly real beings, like Beauty itself, are described in Plato's analogical myth as perfectly static and unchanging, unmoving and unmoved, *outside* of the heavens which exhaust the dynamic world.⁷¹ The soul, on the other hand, both human and divine, is defined by its motion and change, and by a complete inability ever to be static or unchanging. Every soul is in essence a "self-mover,"⁷² and "what moves itself... never desists from motion, since it does not leave off being itself."⁷³ There is a certain sense, then, in which a soul cannot, *in principle*, be perfect, at least not in the complete sense in which the perfectly real beings are.

However, Plato explicitly describes the souls of the gods, and the others among the souls in heaven who are most successful in becoming like the gods, as perfect. At the time when our un-embodied souls attended the divine banquet of knowledge, he argues, "we who celebrated it were wholly perfect, and free of all the troubles that awaited us in time to come."⁷⁴ Presumably, then, these souls are perfect in some sense other than that in which the perfectly real beings are. Moreover, there seems to be a *sense* in which even an embodied human being may be 'perfect,' since "A man who uses reminders of these things [presumably, the perfectly real beings, and possibly his other experiences in heaven as well] correctly is always at the highest, most perfect level of initiation, and he

⁷¹ *Phaedrus* 247c1-e2.

⁷² *Phaedrus* 245e3.

⁷³ *Phaedrus* 245c6-7.

⁷⁴ *Phaedrus* 250c1-2.

is the only one who is as perfect as perfect can be.”⁷⁵ The kind of ‘perfection’ being hinted at here, then, seems not to be the *complete* perfection which one finds in the perfectly real beings, but rather, the kind of ‘perfection’ which we can attribute to a thing which has become *as perfect* as a thing of that sort could possibly be. Even the gods, it seems, are not really ‘wholly’ perfect, nor are they themselves the most wholly divine beings, but acquire both their perfection and their divinity, to some extent, derivatively, from their proximity to the perfectly real beings. It is only these perfectly real beings outside of heaven which are fully perfect, and which make up the “realities by being close to which the gods are divine.”⁷⁶ The gods themselves then, are not completely perfect beings, but rather, the most perfect possible *souls*. And so when we, as souls, aspire to be perfect, what we must aspire to be is like them.

When the lover experiences his revelatory recollection of Beauty, then, it seems that he becomes aware, to whatever extent, of at least three things: first, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of the perfectly real beings; second, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of the gods, and in particular of his own god; and third, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of his own immaterial soul. He consequently comes to realize, however clearly or confusedly, several different things about the nature of his own aspirations. He realizes, first, that he desires desperately to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings again, and, moreover, that this is something which can only be

⁷⁵ *Phaedrus* 249c7-9.

⁷⁶ *Phaedrus* 249c7.

accomplished in the very long term, and not in his embodied life on earth. Second, he realizes that he himself was once a much more perfect and contented being than he is now, and that he desires to be this sort of being again, to become again his more perfect, and most perfect, self. He further realizes, it seems, that this most perfect self which he once was possessed a certain *sort* of perfection, and that it achieved this particular sort of perfection by emulating the most perfect example of perfection of that kind, in the person of a particular god. Third, he realizes that he desires desperately to be in the presence of this god again, just as he does to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings, but that this, also, is not something which he can achieve in this life. He will thus set out to regain as much of his former perfection and closeness to the real beings and his god as is possible in this world, by emulating his god and pursuing insight into the nature of the real beings to whatever extent is possible for an embodied human being, perhaps with hopes, ultimately, of reclaiming his former existence.

To speak in this way of different *kinds* of perfection may seem strange, in a Platonic context, but we must keep in mind that the ‘perfection’ we are speaking of here is not the true or complete perfection possessed by the perfectly real beings. Rather, it is the greatest perfection, the closest approximation to true perfection, we might say, which it is possible for *souls* to achieve. And this degree of perfection, it seems, is the greatest perfection achievable by any being within the bounds of heaven.⁷⁷ But if the perfection of the gods is only an approximation to complete perfection, the greatest possible

⁷⁷ At least, this would seem to be the case within the cosmology of the *Phaedrus*.

perfection achievable for souls, then it is only a certain degree of perfection which the gods possess, and there will always be some extent to which even the gods are lacking. It becomes plausible, then, even on Plato's view, that this same degree of perfection might be achievable in various ways.⁷⁸ Each of the gods, then, would represent one of the possible ways in which a soul might most closely approximate true perfection, one of the ways in which a soul, to some extent inevitably imperfect by its very nature, might come to be as perfect as a soul can be.

In its un-embodied life in heaven, it then seems, the soul desired to be close to perfection in at least three ways. First, it desired to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings, which embody a complete perfection of a kind unachievable for itself, but the understanding of which strengthened and fortified it to maintain itself in the most perfect state which was possible for it. Second, it desired to be in the presence of its god, the embodiment and example of the most perfect state which a soul of its own disposition could possibly achieve. And third, it desired to make itself as much like its god as it could, to actually become as perfect as its own disposition could possibly allow. All of these aspirations of our un-embodied souls appear to be closely connected on Plato's account; each kind of 'closeness' to perfection enables the furtherance and persistence of the others. However, there is no obvious priority among them. Do our souls, and those of the gods, desire to behold the perfectly real beings because this will strengthen them

⁷⁸ That is, again, it becomes plausible within the context of the *Phaedrus* specifically. Whether this view is compatible with all of Plato's arguments elsewhere, and in particular with some of his views on the unity of the virtues, is a further question, and one I do not mean to have claimed to address here.

and keep them in their most perfect state as they go about the rest of their existence within heaven? Or do they desire to be strengthened in soul and as perfect as possible because this is what will allow them to continue to behold the perfectly real beings? Do they desire to follow their god because this will help them to perfect their own souls? Or do they desire to perfect their own souls, at least in part, because this will allow them to follow their god more closely? Aspects of the myth seem to hint at any or all of these answers. And it seems important, for this point, that the souls who attain the rim of heaven and behold the real beings outside do not remain in this state of beatific vision indefinitely. Although the ‘divine banquet’ is a deeply ecstatic experience for all of the souls, it does not exhaust their existence, nor is it the final aim of their existence, towards which they strive until it is achieved, and in which they then remain. Their ‘home’ is within heaven, and their proper “work”⁷⁹ is here. The answer to these questions, then, is not at all obvious.

The fact that the answer is not obvious, however, may give us some helpful insight into the experience of the lover. Having come to understand these three desires in himself, to be in the presence of the real beings, to be in the presence of his god, and to be in his own most perfect possible un-embodied state, through emulation of his god, he has also come to understand that none of these desires can be fully satisfied in his current, embodied, life. Each of these desires, however, has an analogue in his current, embodied, life, and he will now recognize that he pursues these desires as the closest possible

⁷⁹ *Phaedrus* 247a6.

approximation to the joys of his un-embodied life here in this world. As each of these three aspects of his former existence were interconnected and mutually supporting, but were nevertheless to some extent distinct and independent sources of joy and satisfaction in his un-embodied life, each of which he desired and pursued, so too are their analogues in this world. And while he now knows that, in the long run, his greatest desire is to regain these pleasures of his former life in heaven, he may also pursue their analogues here on earth for the independent sake of the similar joy and satisfaction they provide him, and not only instrumentally. The lover may pursue recollection of the perfect beings, then, not only as a means to regaining his former life in heaven, but because the experience of this recollection is the closest thing possible in this life to the joy of beholding them directly in his former one.⁸⁰ He will attempt to make his soul as much like that of his god as possible, despite being separated from much of his own ‘divine’ nature by being bound up with a physical body, “locked in it like an oyster in its shell,”⁸¹ not only because this might ultimately help him to regain his original state, but because this is the way of life that will allow him to be at his best and most contented with his own condition while he remains ‘down here.’ And, he will seek out closeness and intimacy with another human being who is like his god in character, not only because this may help him in his own process of emulating, and perhaps ultimately regaining his place beside, the god, but because this nearness to another soul which is like his god’s is the

⁸⁰ And, indeed, it seems quite likely that the philosopher, as another kind of lover, does precisely this.

⁸¹ *Phaedrus* 250c6-7.

closest joy which he can have in this life to his former nearness to the god himself. And so Plato describes the lover as seeing his beloved, in the beginning, as to some extent a proxy for his god, treating him “like his very own god, building him up and adorning him as an image to honor and worship.”⁸²

So, here is an answer to at least a part of our previous question: if the lover is driven to pursue a beloved by his revelatory recollection of the true nature of beauty, then why does he seek out a beloved of a particular personality type, rather than simply the most beautiful beloved he can find? There is only one Beauty, after all, not different types. The answer seems to be that, although at first the lover is motivated only by a confused desire to be near that which is beautiful, after his experience of recollection of the perfect beings, his desires have broadened. While he still desires to be in the presence of someone beautiful, his aims have changed more than is explained only by his new understanding of what beauty really is. He now, with his newfound insight into his former life in heaven, has discovered an additional desire: to be near someone who is like his god. He now seeks out a beloved, then, who is *both* of these things, both beautiful in soul and body and of a character like that of his god. But another part of our question remains unanswered: if the lover is driven by a desire to be near someone who is like his god, then why would he choose a beloved who displayed the mere *potential* to be like his god, rather than searching for the most perfect example of this personality type that he could find?

⁸² *Phaedrus* 252e1-2.

The answer to this part of our question seems slightly more complicated. We have said that the lover desires, now, two different but related things: to be close to that which is beautiful, and to be close to a soul like that of his god. That beauty with which he is most concerned now is not physical beauty, however, but spiritual or psychological beauty, the beauty of the beloved's soul. Combining these two concerns, then, and setting aside for the moment the interest which the lover does still retain, to some extent, in the physical beauty of his beloved, we might say that the lover now desires to be close to a soul which is beautiful in a specific way, that is, in that way of which his own god is the most perfect example. We might say, then, that the lover desires to be close to a certain kind of beauty of soul. The beauty of souls, however, unlike the beauty of bodies, is not directly perceptible through the senses.⁸³ Physical proximity alone, then, will not be enough to reliably bring the lover into contact with this kind of beauty, in the way that it was enough to give him access to the physical beauty of the beloved through his faculty of sight. To be close to the beauty of the beloved's soul, the lover must find a way to gain some sort of access to the beloved's soul or mind. And to do this reliably would seem to require the trust and confidence of the beloved, a willingness on his part to share his thoughts and experiences, to more intimately and fully reveal the contents and the character of his soul to the lover. With his newfound insight into the nature of both Beauty and the soul, moreover, the lover will presumably be able to realize this. The sort of closeness he desires, then, is no longer the sort of thing which the lover might have

⁸³ See above, p. 17; c.f. Plato. *Charmides*. Trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 154d1-155a4.

any hope of achieving solely through his own initiative, without the consent and assistance of the beloved. And so the lover must find a beloved who not only displays the kind of beauty of soul to which he hopes to be near, but who is also willing to share that beauty with him, to trust him with a nearness to his soul, by giving him access, in a suitable sense, to his inner self and life.

IV. Pedagogical Love

But what would move the beloved, initially, to do this? The lover is motivated in his pursuit of the beloved by the desire he has to be close to the kind of soul which he believes the beloved to have, but what is to motivate the beloved to allow, and even to actively promote, such closeness between them? Plato's account of this initial stage of the relationship from the perspective of the beloved is somewhat vague in the *Phaedrus*, up until the point at which the beloved himself in turn falls in love with the lover. And by this point in the relationship, it seems, there must already be an established degree of closeness and non-physical intimacy between the lover and the beloved. What initially moves the beloved to allow the lover a place in his life, it seems, is the recognition by the beloved that the lover genuinely desires to help him and to offer him some good or benefit. "Because he is served with all the attentions due a god by a lover..., and because he is by nature disposed to be a friend of the man who is serving him... as time goes forward he is brought... to a point where he lets the man spend time with him."⁸⁴ And

⁸⁴ *Phaedrus* 255a1-b2. This passage in its entirety is somewhat more erotically charged than the way in which I have excerpted it here suggests, but I do not take this to be a significant omission for purposes of the present argument.

once he has allowed the lover to spend time with him, and begun to engage with him in conversation and joint activities, he comes to realize how deeply the lover desires not only to be near him, but to help and to benefit him. “Now that he allows his lover to talk and spend time with him, and the man’s good will is close at hand, the boy is amazed by it as he realizes that all the friendship he has from his other friends and relatives put together is nothing compared to that of this friend who is inspired by a god.”⁸⁵ Notice, here, the increased reliance on the language of *philia*, as opposed to *eros*, in this passage addressing the development of the relationship from the perspective of the beloved. This is a point to which we will return again shortly. For now, though, we see that it seems the beloved is initially drawn to the lover by the realization that the lover genuinely desires, and, perhaps, to some extent is actually able, to benefit him and offer him help. There is an extent, then, to which the beloved is initially drawn to the lover by just what one might be led to expect by a more traditional Greek understanding of the dynamic within such relationships: the expectation of some benefit to himself.

And this is in line with much of what we see brought forward in Plato’s arguments in the *Lysis*, where one of the central troubles driving the *aporia* seems to be the question of how it can be possible for both parties to a friendship to benefit one another, when the capacity to offer benefit seems, on the face of it, to imply a position of superiority, at least in that respect in which the benefit is offered.⁸⁶ It is a central element

⁸⁵ *Phaedrus* 255b3-7.

⁸⁶ See, in particular, Plato. *Lysis*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 214e4-215a7 & 221d1-e4. Hereafter ‘*Lysis*.’

of Plato's arguments in the *Lysis* that friends must be of benefit, or 'useful,' to one another. To him it seems, on the face of it, however, that "like is useless to like insofar as they are alike. And to admit that the useless is a friend would strike a sour note."⁸⁷ If the friends are to benefit one another, then, it seems initially as though the benefits they offer one another must be different. Moreover, this discussion of friendship in the *Lysis* is dramatically nested within a discussion of eros. The dialogue with Lysis is conducted at least partially for the benefit of his hapless lover, as a lesson from Socrates in how to "carry on a conversation with him instead of talking and singing the way... you've been doing,"⁸⁸ and so, presumably, to more successfully engage his attention. And if there is any conclusion in the *Lysis* which seems to be taken seriously as a culmination of the dialogue, it is not one about friendship in general, but about its specific application within erotic relationships, the claim that "the genuine and not pretended lover must be befriended by his boy."⁸⁹ This question, then, of how the parties to a relationship are to benefit one another unless each is offering something in which the other is "deficient,"⁹⁰ along with the presumption that one cannot offer to another something in which one is equally 'deficient' oneself, seems to be treated as an equally important and thorny problem in the specific case of erotic love. If "a thing desires what it is deficient in,"⁹¹ it seems initially, then that which the lover desires in or from the beloved, and that which

⁸⁷ *Lysis* 222b9-c2.

⁸⁸ *Lysis* 206c 6-8.

⁸⁹ *Lysis* 222b1-2.

⁹⁰ *Lysis* 221e1.

⁹¹ *Lysis* 221e1.

the beloved desires in or from the lover (if, indeed, the beloved feels desire toward the lover at all) must be different, and the traditional view of such relationships as essentially asymmetric is maintained. If this really is the case for the lover and beloved, though, Plato's argument in the *Lysis* implies, then it is so for reasons which apply equally well to *all* friendships. And the claim that *all* friendships are essentially asymmetric, especially in the strong way in which erotic relationships have been traditionally conceived of as being, looks quite a bit more difficult to swallow. This again, though, is a point to which we will later return. For now, let's focus on the emphasis which the *Lysis* places, here and elsewhere, on the thought that in order for the lover to gain the beloved's affection, to be 'befriended by his boy,' he must be able to offer the beloved some benefit which the beloved will recognize as such. What sort of a benefit could we expect this to be, in the context of Plato's account in the *Phaedrus*?

Given the lover's newfound focus on the goods of the soul and the world of the gods and the perfectly real beings, and consequent understanding of love as, at least in large part, an avenue for honoring and pursuing these goods, it seems reasonable to think that he would search for a beloved who would likewise value, or at least be strongly inclined to value, these same sorts of goods. And, given Plato's view of human virtue, it seems likely that in searching for a beautiful soul, of whatever sort, he would be searching for a soul who would also value such goods highly. In attempting to offer some benefit to his beloved, then, as a way of winning his trust and affection, it seems reasonable to think that the lover would want this benefit to be of the sort which a

beautiful soul would think valuable. The beloved's appreciation of a lover's generosity with less genuinely admirable goods, perhaps even such unworthy ones as the money or social advancement which seem to be promised (but rarely delivered) by the lovers condemned in Socrates' and Lysias' earlier speeches, would display a conspicuous deficiency in the very qualities of soul to which the 'genuine' lover is most attracted in a beloved. A beloved's receptivity to benefits of this sort from a prospective lover, then, might be a strong indication to the lover in search of a beautiful soul that he had chosen his beloved unwisely. The sort of benefits which such a lover could be expected to offer his beloved, then, in order to initially attract his attention and gain his trust, would seem most likely to be benefits to the beloved's soul, and in particular to those aspects of his soul which the lover has come to see as most highly valuable: his personal virtue and philosophical understanding of the gods and the real beings. In responding positively to the offer of such benefits, then, and perceiving their exceptional value, the beloved will only be further confirming his lover's belief that he is indeed a beautiful soul, with his natural ability to recognize the truly valuable un-effaced by his time spent away from heaven.

And to be in a position to offer such benefits to the beloved in the development of his soul, it seems natural to think, the lover must pursue a beloved who is at least not significantly his own superior in these respects. Since the lover himself, then, is still far from having achieved his hope of fully emulating his god, his beloved, likewise, if he is to attract him with the promise of benefit in this respect, must possess the potential for

such an achievement, but not yet its full realization. The lover's search for a beloved, then, is constrained by two parameters upon the beloved's degree of achievement with respect to the perfection of his soul: the lover's desire for a beautiful soul will attract him to those of significant achievement with respect to virtue, while his desire for intimacy with such a soul will drive him towards those whose degree of achievement is not so high as to place them beyond his own capacity to assist in this respect. These opposite pressures, it seems, one providing a lower and one an upper limit upon the realized virtue of the beloved, will drive him towards the pursuit of a beloved with a degree of virtue roughly similar to his own. To a soul in this condition, the philosophical and psychological insight which the lover has recently gained through his experience of love will present a significant and attractive benefit, an advantage in the pursuit of virtue which the beloved does not yet share, and one which may allow the lover to win his attention and trust.

At this intermediate stage of the relationship, then, in which the beloved has accepted the lover's advances, and admitted him into a trusted place among his social intimates, but does not yet return his love, the relationship between the two is still broadly pedagogical. The lover relies upon the insight love has granted him into the nature of their god, the real beings, and souls like their own to guide the beloved in his nascent emulation of that god and pursuit of philosophy and virtue. The benefits which each receives, in turn, remain very different: the beloved receives the lover's assistance in pursuing greater wisdom and virtue, while the lover receives (primarily) the pleasure of

closeness to the beloved's burgeoning spiritual beauty. Already at this stage in the relationship, then, the benefits which love has brought to both parties are considerable. The frenzy and discomfort which eros had initially induced in the lover have been soothed and assuaged by the combination of his own increased understanding and psychological discipline and his success in attaining some physical and psychological intimacy with the object of his desire. The more disturbing signs of 'madness' which had marked his initial experience of love have been replaced by a level of contentment with these achievements, and enjoyment of the company of his beautiful beloved. For the beloved's part, it seems, such a relationship is likely to be both educationally rewarding and socially unburdensome. Lovers of this sort "show no envy, no mean-spirited lack of generosity, toward the boy, but make every possible effort to draw him into being totally like themselves and the god to whom they are devoted,"⁹² and so the beloved will find himself with much to gain, and little of importance to lose. A relationship which never progressed beyond this stage, perhaps, would be nothing to be ashamed of, as the 'madness' of love, thus properly pursued by the lover, has already brought much benefit to both parties, and done little harm, if any, to either. Crucially, though, a love which never progressed beyond this stage would still have fallen far short of providing the 'greatest benefit' to the lover and beloved of which Plato argues that love is capable. And, perhaps even more crucially, at this stage the lover has done very nearly everything he can to respond to his experience of love correctly. If the relationship which he now

⁹² *Phaedrus* 253b7-10.

shares with his beloved is to offer its fullest benefit to either one of them, this further development is no longer in his hands. The success of their love now depends not primarily upon the lover's agency, but on that of the beloved.

V. The Beloved Becomes a Lover

If all goes as it ideally should between the lover and beloved, then after they have spent some time together in this sort of a relationship, the lover guiding and assisting the beloved, and the beloved rewarding him with affection and social intimacy, the beloved, in turn, will find himself unexpectedly stuck by his own transformational experience of eros:

Think how a breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source; that is how the stream of beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter. It enters through his eyes, which are its natural rout to the soul; there it waters the passages for the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one with love in return.⁹³

Just as the lover initially was, then, the beloved is taken off guard by a sudden confrontation with the seemingly disproportionate power which beauty has over him. Unlike the lover's, however, the beloved's shocking experience of beauty is not elicited directly by a sensory encounter with an 'image' of beauty in one of the 'things down here,' but is in some crucial sense mediated by his existing relationship with the lover. The beauty which he thus encounters, moreover, is not just any beauty, or even the beauty of the lover himself,⁹⁴ but in some sense an 'echo,' or reflection of the beloved's *own* beauty, which he seems to have previously taken little notice of. And, though it is the

⁹³ *Phaedrus* 255c4-d2.

⁹⁴ Or, at least not *only* the beauty of the lover. More on this difficult point later.

beloved's own beauty he sees, he is initially unable to recognize himself in it. This experience of beauty, then, is every bit as maddening and disorienting for him as it was for his lover. "The boy is in love, but he has no idea what he loves. He does not know, and cannot explain, what has happened to him.... He does not realize that he is seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror."⁹⁵

If he too responds to his love correctly, it seems, this experience of confronting his own beauty in the 'mirror' of the lover will lead him along a precisely similar journey of revelatory recollection and psychological self-development. Just as the lover was, he now finds himself overwhelmed by the urge to be close to the seeming possessor of this earthly beauty, the lover who has made this beauty visible to him. Just as the lover did, he finds relief for his frenzied state of soul only in the presence of his beloved other. "So, when the lover is near, the boy's pain is relieved... and when they are apart he yearns as much as he is yearned for, because he has a mirror image of love in him – 'backlove' – though he neither speaks nor thinks of it as love, but as friendship."⁹⁶ And just as the lover was, he is at first inclined to misinterpret this violent attraction as a primarily physical desire, driven by the desperate need he feels to be close to that which nourishes the wings of his soul, and by the unenlightened urgings of his own 'bad horse,' to mistake sexual intercourse for the most suitable way to calm his inner turmoil. Afforded easy access to the lover by their well established social relationship, moreover, he now faces a

⁹⁵ *Phaedrus* 255d3-5.

⁹⁶ *Phaedrus* 255d7-e2.

much less significant practical barrier to acting on these urgings than the lover had initially found. In the throes of the first frenzy of erotic madness “he wants to see, touch, kiss, and lie down with”⁹⁷ the lover, and with few external circumstances to impede his path toward doing so “of course, as you might expect, he acts on these desires soon after they occur.”⁹⁸ The beloved’s first encounter with eros, then, is in some ways even more precarious than that of the lover, insofar as the immediate accessibility of his beloved other provides him with an even greater opportunity to go astray in his interpretation of what is happening to him. Without an enforced passage of time between the dizzying onset of erotic symptoms and the practical possibility of a sexual encounter with the desired individual, provided in the lover’s case by the need for an extended seduction, the beloved seems in even greater danger of reacting unreflectively to his desire, forgoing the opportunity to be reminded of the world of the gods and the perfectly real beings in favor of the far easier path of surrendering to pleasure like a ‘four-footed beast.’

And this, in turn, provides a new temptation for the lover as well. “When they are in bed, the lover’s undisciplined horse has a word to say to the charioteer – that after all its sufferings it is entitled to a little fun.”⁹⁹ After all that he has done to tame the bad horse in his soul, then, to bring it into harmony with the good horse, under the control of the charioteer, the lover is now likely to find himself in a position where all external barriers to taking an action which he rationally recognizes as harmful to both his beloved

⁹⁷ *Phaedrus* 255e3-4.

⁹⁸ *Phaedrus* 255e4-5.

⁹⁹ *Phaedrus* 255e6-256a2.

and the long-term well-being of their relationship with one another have been removed. In his own confused struggle to understand the effect that eros is having on him, the beloved is still painfully torn between the pull of the bad horse in his soul and that of the good horse, and given, in addition, the faith which he has in the lover's desire to do him good, may be easily swayed by attempts that the lover might make to initiate more serious sexual activity. At this critical point in their relationship, then, the beloved is uniquely vulnerable to harm by a moment of weakness on the part of the lover. "The boy's bad horse has nothing to say, but swelling with desire, confused, it hugs the lover and kisses him in delight at his great good will. And whenever they are lying together it is completely unable, for its own part, to deny the lover any favor he might beg to have."¹⁰⁰ The beloved's bad horse, however, is far from the dominant force in his soul. Just as it had in the lover's case, the increased proximity to his beloved other provokes not only a greater intensity in the straining of the bad horse, but also a powerful counter-reaction. The charioteer in the beloved's soul, with the good horse under its command as an ally, will resist the urgings of the bad horse in his soul, and, if sufficiently strong, even the misguided pleadings of a briefly faltering lover, overcoming the forces of both these internal and external challenges "with modesty and reason."¹⁰¹

The lover and beloved, then, are now both battling the bad horses in their respective souls. Although the lover has already done much to tame his bad horse, it

¹⁰⁰ *Phaedrus* 256a2-4.

¹⁰¹ *Phaedrus* 256a6-7.

seems, so that it no longer attempts to overpower the good horse and the charioteer by sheer force, as it did in its initial drive towards sex with the beloved, it has not fallen silent in attempts to *persuade* the charioteer to indulge it. This sort of influence by the bad horse, though perhaps more subtle, may be even more dangerous, insofar as the charioteer, if mistakenly persuaded, has the power to direct the good horse into cooperation as well. Should the bad horse succeed in misleading the charioteer, then, it seems there will be nothing left in the soul to combat it. The beloved, in turn, has still to fight both battles with the bad horse in his soul, to restrain it by countervailing force into submission as the lover initially had, and to learn to reject its more subtle pleadings for complicity by his charioteer, before he can be confident that he has overcome its influence sufficiently for the success of his love. As this common psychological struggle continues, if it is to be successful, then at some point in the development of their now mutual love the two parties will find themselves approaching a position of parity. Each now both loves and desires the other, and each is engaged in an equivalent process of spiritual and psychological self-development which requires a growing philosophical knowledge of their own nature and the nature of the goods at which their eros aims in order to succeed. At first the lover, already some way along this path of self-development, may be able to assist the beloved in his own struggle against his bad horse, but eventually the beloved will catch up with him along this path, and by the time that they have both succeeded in this struggle, they will find themselves in a roughly equivalent position. The advantage in insight which the lover initially enjoyed, by virtue

of his revelatory experience of love, will be gradually effaced by the beloved's own progression through this same revelatory experience. If both are successful in their response to love, then, "if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds,"¹⁰² then the fundamental asymmetry of their relationship will be dissolved. The distinction between their roles as lover and beloved will become a primarily historical (and perhaps social/conventional) one, with little importance for the continuing dynamic within their relationship.

And such a relationship will, Plato makes a point to emphasize, continue, not just until the fury of passion has run its course, but throughout both parties' lives, and even into the afterlife. Having mutually conquered the influence of their respective bad horses, under what one might imagine to be some of the most challenging circumstances possible, the pair of lovers "are modest and fully in control of themselves, now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue."¹⁰³ This better part of their souls, in turn, "will lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy"¹⁰⁴ in the remainder of their lives together, and if they do this, then "their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding."¹⁰⁵ Notice here, that Plato is no longer speaking of two lives, but of one. The lovers who have come this far, it seems, will share not only understanding, but everything which is important to the

¹⁰² *Phaedrus* 256a7-8.

¹⁰³ *Phaedrus* 256b1-4.

¹⁰⁴ *Phaedrus* 256a8.

¹⁰⁵ *Phaedrus* 256b1.

definition of a life. From this point forward they will share not only time and activities, but in some important sense have a single life in common. And this shared life will be one of a sort which Plato has already claimed in his analogical myth will bring them the greatest possible achievement for an earthly human being:

No soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of a man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically. If, after the third cycle of one thousand years, the last mentioned souls have chosen such a life three times in a row, they grow their wings back, and they depart in the three-thousandth year.¹⁰⁶

To ‘love boys philosophically,’ it seems, is an obvious candidate for what the palinode has just been explaining to us how to do. By the end of this explanation, however, it seems we have come to a potentially surprising conclusion: that it is not specifically loving *boys* philosophically which grants this great benefit, but *loving* philosophically, at all. There seems little sense in which the original beloved of our “philosophical pair”¹⁰⁷ could be plausibly considered a *paiderastes*, philosophical or otherwise. However, an early regrowth of the wings of the soul is now claimed equally for him. The pair of philosophical lovers, “after death... have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests. There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man.”¹⁰⁸ This then, is the ‘greatest good fortune’ which Socrates has set out to argue that love, properly followed, will ensure, a benefit won equally by both ‘a lover and his boy.’

¹⁰⁶ *Phaedrus* 248e8-249a5.

¹⁰⁷ *Phaedrus* 256c8-d1.

¹⁰⁸ *Phaedrus* 256b4-7.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the palinode's account of love does not end here. Even for those who ultimately fail to 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy,' a love which has come this far will have created a powerful and lasting bond between the parties:

If... they adopt a lower way of living, with ambition in place of philosophy, then pretty soon when they are careless..., the pair's undisciplined horses will catch their souls off guard and together bring them to commit that act which ordinary people would take to be the happiest choice of all; and when they have consummated it once, they go on doing this for the rest of their lives.... So these two also live in mutual friendship (though weaker than that of the philosophical pair), both while they are in love and after they have passed beyond it.¹⁰⁹

And this pair, too, will have won a great reward by their love, though, again, not as great as that of the 'philosophical pair:' "In death they are wingless when they leave the body, but their wings are bursting to sprout, so the prize they have won from the madness of love is considerable."¹¹⁰ Moreover, even in death they will remain together, and be jointly granted a happy afterlife as a consequence of their success in love: "those who have begun the sacred journey in lower heaven may not by law be sent into darkness for the journey under the earth; their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes."¹¹¹ Though this pair has failed to win the great reward reserved for philosophers and those who love philosophically, then, and so it seems that they will have to wait at least the full ten lifetimes to reclaim their wings, they are nevertheless to be seen as having gained some advantage with respect to this aim, because of the love that they share. And this is an

¹⁰⁹ *Phaedrus* 256b7-d1.

¹¹⁰ *Phaedrus* 256d3-5.

¹¹¹ *Phaedrus* 256d6-9.

advantage which is not to be gained by those who respond to their experience of eros in a way which does not lead to the forging of such lasting and mutual bonds, even when it does lead to an otherwise rewarding and even constructively virtuous relationship, as in the case of the broadly ‘pedagogical’ pairing we discussed before. Moreover, the advantage thus gained by these lovers is not only cast in terms of the acquisition of a more blessed afterlife, this blessedness itself is in turn closely linked with the fact that the journey they take there is no longer taken alone. It seems that the advantage which this lesser pair of lovers gains, then, both in the afterlife and in their more ideal position with respect to regrowing their wings, may not only be caused by the lasting and mutual friendship which keeps them together through life and the afterlife, but perhaps at least partially constituted by that friendship as well.

And it is here that Socrates abruptly ends his palinode to love, with a description of the benefits not of the highest kind of eros, but of this ‘second best’ sort of relationship, and a reminder that the speech has been directed, hypothetically, not to an aspiring lover, but to a prospective beloved. “These are the rewards you will have from a lover’s friendship, my boy, and they are as great as divine gifts should be.”¹¹² The implication seems to be, then, that even though this lesser pair of lovers does not gain the ‘greatest good fortune’ with which love is capable of providing us, they have nevertheless gained more than enough to make all of their struggles and great risks worthwhile. Despite acknowledging the serious risks of being badly led astray by one’s own ‘bad

¹¹² *Phaedrus* 256e3-4.

horse' in the earlier stages of love, that is, as well as the potentially dangerous effects that love may have on the behavior of an unworthy lover, and even given the likelihood that both parties may still fail to love 'philosophically' even after the most dramatic battles in their wars with their respective bad horses have been won, Socrates is nevertheless recommending this arduous process to the beloved whole-heartedly, as one well worth undertaking.

VI. How Love Moves the Beloved

It seems that we must now ask, again, then, what exactly we should take to have happened to the beloved, now himself become a lover, in the course of this process of falling in love. What are we to make of the development of this 'mirror image of love' in the beloved, as Plato has described it to us here? The first question to ask in this respect would seem to be how we are to understand Plato's claim that it is in some sense the beloved's *own* beauty which triggers his initial experience of love, in light of the further claim that this beauty is mediated, in some crucial way, by the person or presence of his lover. There seem to be several obvious candidates for how we might interpret this claim. First, from the suggestion that 'the stream of beauty' 'enters through his eyes,' we might infer that the beauty in question is of a literally visible, that is, physical, sort. The claim would then be that it is the beloved's encounter with his own physical beauty, facilitated in some way by his lover, that touches off his experience of eros. There are several reasons why this version of the claim should strike us as implausible, however. Remember, first of all, what it is about physical beauty that makes it so uniquely suited to

elicit an erotic response: the fact that it “alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible”¹¹³ of all the ‘images’ we can encounter of the real beings here on earth. And the ‘visibility’ in question here, importantly, is *literal*, not figurative. It is because we can, unexpectedly, catch literal sight of an ‘image’ of Beauty as we go about our daily lives, experiencing a shock of recognition as this ‘image’ confronts us through “the sharpest of our bodily senses,”¹¹⁴ that the ‘beauty down here,’ as opposed to the many less literal ‘images’ of the other perfect beings, is most likely to provoke an unsought for experience of recollection in our souls. And this link with direct perceptibility, it seems, is the *only* advantage that physical beauty enjoys in this respect. Were physical beauty in any way more intrinsically lovable than, or even, perhaps, as lovable as, the other earthly ‘images’ of beauty, it seems, and, more specifically, than spiritual or psychological beauty in particular, then the transformation in focus which the lover’s initial attraction to his beloved undergoes upon his dawning awareness of Beauty’s true nature would be prevented. Moreover, even beauty as such, physical and otherwise, it seems, is not intrinsically more suited to serve as a spark for eros than are the earthly ‘images’ of other perfect beings, except insofar as it enjoys this advantage with respect to direct perceptibility: “It would awaken a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as beauty does, and the same goes for the other objects of inspired love.”¹¹⁵ No such direct perception of an earthly ‘image’ of wisdom (or virtue,

¹¹³ *Phaedrus* 250e1.

¹¹⁴ *Phaedrus* 250d3-4.

¹¹⁵ *Phaedrus* 250d4-e1.

or self-control, etc.) is possible, however. These qualities of soul, like souls themselves, it seems, can only be inferred from our direct perceptions of physical bodies. If the beauty which touched off the beloved's overpowering experience of eros were physical beauty, then, it seems that this beauty would need to be something he perceived directly, though his bodily senses. But in what way could the lover facilitate such a direct sensory encounter between the beloved and his own physical beauty, which would make any sense of the description Plato gives us of his role in the beloved's experience of eros? The imagery here is of an *indirect* encounter with the earthly beauty he confronts: an echo, reflection, or ricochet. This beauty 'bounces back' to the beloved, with whom it had originated, from the lover who had first been struck by it. Since the lover, presumably, does not literally reflect back an image, then, the talk of 'seeing' in this context seems best taken as figurative. If this beauty is not literally *seen* by the beloved, though, it seems best taken not to be physical beauty, given that, aside from its advantage in direct perceptibility, physical beauty is in fact less suited to touch off an experience of recollection, and so eros, than are those non-physical 'images' of beauty which more closely resemble Beauty itself.

The most likely candidate for the beauty the beloved experiences in this way, then, is not beauty of the body, but of the soul. And given Plato's claim that this is the beloved's *own* beauty, reflected back to him in some way by the lover, it seems safe to assume that it is in some sense the beauty of the beloved's own soul. But what are we to make of this claim that the beloved somehow 'sees' the beauty of his own soul 'in the

lover' in this indirect way? Given what we have already said of the relationship between the lover and beloved up until this point, there seem to be at least two fairly obvious readings we might give of this claim. First, we might emphasize the talk of the lover as a 'mirror' of the beloved's beauty over the claim that this beauty is the beloved's own in a highly particular sense, and recall that the process of falling in love we have traced on the part of the lover has ensured a high degree of similarity between the souls of the lover and beloved.¹¹⁶ If the lover has chosen his beloved wisely, we have argued, then the beloved's soul will be very much like that of the lover along both of the axes according to which Plato has argued that souls are divided into general types. In searching for a soul like that of his god, the lover will have sought out a beloved of the same unchanging character type as his own, as determined by 'the god in whose chorus he danced' before his birth into this world. And in searching for a soul which is not already so accomplished in virtue as to be beyond his own ability to aid in this respect, while already as beautiful as he is capable of winning given this constraint imposed by his own worthiness as a suitor, he will have sought out a beloved whose degree of accomplishment in the development of his soul is relatively comparable to his own. As the beloved comes to know the lover well, then, through the time they spend together and their many conversations with each other, both philosophical and otherwise, he will come to know a soul which is in many of the most important ways very much like his own. In coming to know the lover well, then, the beloved is coming to know a soul whose beauty

¹¹⁶ If, at least, the lover has followed it out correctly.

closely ‘mirrors’ his own, in both type and degree. Remember, moreover, that the lover’s own spiritual and psychological development has already been greatly improved beyond that which he had achieved prior to his ‘possession’ by eros by the philosophical insight and internal struggle towards self-discipline and understanding which have been required of him by his experience of love thus far. There is a sense in which, then, the current beauty of the lover’s soul is not only a mirror image of the beloved’s, but its causal consequence as well, insofar as it is the effect that the beauty of the beloved’s soul has had on him which has caused him to develop his own soul to the extent that he currently has. This relationship of both similarity and causal dependency between the beauty of the lover’s soul and that of the beloved’s, then, would seem to give us a plausible reading for both how the beloved could be said to see ‘himself in the lover as in a mirror,’ and how the beauty he saw there could be said to ‘bounce back’ to him as in some sense its original ‘source.’ On this reading, then, the earthly beauty which sets off the beloved’s experience of eros is primarily that which he finds in the soul of the lover, as he comes to know him well through their growing social intimacy, and is best seen as his *own* beauty only at the level of types, and by a strong analogy, through the close similarity between their two souls.

Another plausible reading is available, however, and one which we may have reason to prefer, in the context of our overall reading of the *Phaedrus*. If we emphasize, instead, the claim that the beauty in question is the beloved’s own, in a more particular sense, and treat the talk of ‘mirrors’ and ‘echoes’ as a somewhat more abstractly

metaphorical description of the lover's role in enabling this experience, another fairly obvious reading of how the beloved might come to confront this spiritual or psychological beauty is suggested by the nature of the 'pedagogical' relationship in which we have described the lover and beloved as already engaged. Remember that among the chief benefits the lover has offered the beloved in order to attract his attentions and gain his trust is assistance and direction in the development of his soul towards greater virtue, and so, greater beauty. And it is in large part the insight the lover has gained into the nature of their common god and of human souls of the unchanging type that he and the beloved share which has allowed him to offer this guidance. However, it seems that a general understanding of the various types of soul, both unchanging and qualitative, would be of relatively little use to him, either in offering this guidance to the beloved, or in the development of his own spiritual or psychological beauty, without at least some further understanding of the application of this general knowledge to the particular cases of himself and his beloved, the specific strengths and failings of his own and his beloved's souls with respect to both their current qualitative type and their approximation to the ideal of the unchanging, 'divine,' type, at the emulation of which they ultimately aim. Moreover, we have argued that in choosing a beloved the lover has sought out someone with a soul which he takes to fall within a relatively specific range of present development with respect to virtue and understanding. And if he is to be correct in this assessment of his beloved's current standing with respect to virtue, as it seems that he must, if their love is to be successful, this requires not only a general knowledge of the

nature and types of souls, but an understanding of the particular features of this individual beloved's soul, insofar as these cause and constitute strengths and weaknesses for the beloved with respect to his progress in virtue.¹¹⁷ And this is a theme we see taken up elsewhere in the *Phaedrus* as well: if one is to expertly guide another soul in a given direction, it is not enough to know the destination at which one aims. One must also understand the position from which the soul one hopes to guide begins, in order to know what words or actions will best serve to move that particular soul in the desired direction.

In the second half of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates turns his attention to the topic of rhetoric, he argues that if there is any such thing as a true art of rhetoric it can only be the art of “directing the soul by means of speech, not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private.”¹¹⁸ And to do this artfully, he argues, to direct the souls of others in a manner which is not haphazard, “empirical and artless,”¹¹⁹ but grounded in a true body of knowledge, and therefore reliably effective, will require careful study of the soul: “this is therefore the object towards which the speaker's whole effort is directed, since it is in the soul that he attempts to produce conviction.”¹²⁰ To artfully guide the souls of others towards conviction on a given topic, the true rhetorician must deploy a careful understanding of the psychology of his audience, not only of

¹¹⁷ Whether this knowledge will amount only to something like a very accurate sense of where this individual's soul fits into a general taxonomy of souls of the sort that Plato has begun to lay out for us, or whether it will concern a more individualized understanding of the particular features of this individual's psychology seems unclear, and may depend at least in part upon how fine-grained we take Plato's full conception of the ‘types’ of souls to be. I leave this question open here.

¹¹⁸ *Phaedrus* 261a9-10.

¹¹⁹ *Phaedrus* 270b6.

¹²⁰ *Phaedrus* 271a1-3.

psychology in general, although he must have this, but also of the ways in which different souls vary, the various kinds of souls, and the ways in which each of them responds to the various kinds of speech, again, not only in general, but with respect to the given topic at hand, since, presumably, various kinds of soul will be more receptive to various sorts of persuasion with respect to certain topics than to others.¹²¹ And in order to deploy this knowledge effectively, it is not enough for the rhetorician to possess it in the abstract; he must be able to reliably apply it to each of the individual souls to whom he has occasion to address himself: to “put his theory into practice and develop the ability to discern each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life.”¹²² If he has learned his art well, then, he will “not only be able to say what kind of person is convinced by what kind of speech; on meeting someone he will be able to discern what he is like and make clear to himself that the person actually standing in front of him is of just this particular sort of character.”¹²³ And all of this knowledge, both of theory and application, is required, if he is to artfully “direct the soul”¹²⁴ of an individual he intends to persuade, whether in public or in private. Moreover, Socrates argues, when such direction is done properly, with art, by someone who knows the truth about the topic on which he speaks, it can produce not only conviction in the souls of those so guided, but virtue as well.¹²⁵

¹²¹ See *Phaedrus* 271d1-10.

¹²² *Phaedrus* 271d11-e2.

¹²³ *Phaedrus* 271e3-2723.

¹²⁴ *Phaedrus* 271d1.

¹²⁵ *Phaedrus* 270b4-9.

If the lover, then, during what we have called the ‘pedagogical’ stage of his relationship with the beloved, is engaged in a process of guiding the beloved towards both greater philosophical understanding and greater personal virtue, and, furthermore, if we may reasonably take philosophical understanding to at least partially involve the acquisition of the proper convictions with respect to what is true, then he is engaged, at this point in their relationship, in an activity of which true rhetoric is the art: ‘directing the soul’ of his beloved ‘by means of speech’ in order to “impart to it the convictions and virtues”¹²⁶ towards which he hopes for his beloved to aspire. Of course, for him to be able to do this in the special case of his beloved will not require him to be in possession of the full art; one need not be a true rhetorician in order to succeed in love. But what is broadly required in order to reliably guide any given soul in any given direction will presumably be the same in both cases: a knowledge of the topic at hand, and a knowledge of the soul to be so guided. The true rhetorician possesses the art insofar as he is able to identify and know the type and nature of *any* soul with which he is presented, and so to reliably guide the soul of anyone he encounters in the way he desires with respect to any topic of which he has knowledge. His knowledge of souls is exhaustive and general, and applicable in any given case. The lover, on the other hand, need only be able to reliably guide one specific individual’s soul: that of his chosen beloved. The knowledge of souls which he needs to accomplish his aim, then, in addition to an understanding of the nature of souls as such, and of human souls in general, need not extend to an exhaustive

¹²⁶ *Phaedrus* 270b9.

understanding of all of the various types of human souls and their manifestations in and interactions with the world. He need only have this sort of detailed knowledge of the nature of a given soul and its likely responses in the case of the one specific soul which love requires him to successfully guide, the soul of his beloved.

The successful lover, then, in engaging in the project towards which love, at this stage of the relationship, directs him, attempting to guide his beloved towards a greater emulation of their common god, and so, a greater personal virtue and beauty of soul, will need to possess and correctly apply a careful understanding of his beloved's soul, both as it currently is, and as it is capable, at its best, of becoming. And a significant part of his doing this, it seems, given the way in which his own recent progress in virtue has been driven by his newfound insight into the nature of his own soul, both as it now is, and as it stands with respect to his god and its own most perfect possible state, will be an attempt to convey, to whatever extent he can, some portion of his insight into the nature of his beloved's soul to the beloved himself. In guiding the beloved towards a greater realization of his potential for virtue, it seems, the lover must, at least in part, be guiding him towards a greater understanding of his own soul and its beauty, both that which it already possesses, and that of which it is ultimately capable. When the beloved comes to see 'himself in the lover as in a mirror,' then, in the course of this process, it seems natural to read what has happened to him in the following way: the lover, in articulating to the beloved the beauty and potential for beauty which he has come to 'see' in the beloved's soul, the beauty which has led him to choose this particular individual as the

one that he loves, out of all of ‘those who are beautiful,’ has succeeded in bringing the beloved to ‘see’ himself as the lover now ‘sees’ him, to understand the beauty of his own soul as the lover does. On this second reading, then, it is this new insight into the beauty of his own soul which touches off the beloved’s revelatory recollection of true Beauty and experience of eros: the beauty he confronts through the surprising glimpse into his own true nature afforded by his conversations with his lover.

On either of these readings, then, we can see that the beloved begins his own progress through the course of eros not only from a position of somewhat heightened risk,¹²⁷ but also one of relative advantage, compared with that of the original lover. While the lover had initially been moved to his recollection of true Beauty by an encounter with a physical ‘image’ of beauty in the world, the beloved’s own recollection is sparked by an encounter with an instance of beauty of soul, which already much more closely resembles true Beauty than physical beauty ever can. Moreover, insofar as a perception of beauty of soul will already require some degree of intellectual grasp or understanding of the nature of that beauty, in order to recognize it as an ‘image’ of beauty at all, in contrast to the way in which physical beauty can simply strike one as such through the senses, completely unreflectively, the beloved will begin his own experience of love already armed with some portion of the philosophical resources for interpreting this experience correctly which the lover had been forced to develop for himself in the

¹²⁷ Subject as he is to a greater danger of acting precipitously upon his own sexual desires, both as a consequence of the immediate accessibility of his beloved other, and as a possible result of misplaced trust in the persuasions of a lover who has himself wavered in resisting the bad horse in his soul. See above, pp. 45-47.

disorienting aftermath of his initial revelation. The original lover himself, furthermore, so long as he maintains his hard-won control of the bad horse in his soul, will provide an additional resource on which the beloved can rely during his initial struggle to correctly interpret this experience, offering the beloved the benefit of the understanding gained from his own recent struggle with the dizzying onset of love. And once the beloved has successfully navigated the initial confusion which his revelatory recollection of Beauty has created in his soul, and been led by this process, as the lover was, to a new understanding of what his soul most centrally desires, he will find that he is already in possession, in the person of the lover, of a close social intimate who is ideally suited to satisfying his deep desire to be close to a soul which is beautiful in that way of which his god is the most perfect example. For all of the same reasons for which the initiating lover, if he chose his beloved wisely, understood the beloved to be ideally suited to satisfying this desire in him, he is now himself equally suited to satisfying it in the beloved. Moreover, the beloved will now have, as the lover initially did not, not only a beloved, in the person the original lover, who is capable of satisfying this driving desire in him, but also one who both understands and shares all of the other deepest desires which this process of love has brought him to recognize within himself. Returning his attention to the things of this world, the beloved, now become a lover, will find that his lover, now become a beloved, is equally driven to pursue both the otherworldly desires which he has discovered in himself and the earthly analogues to them which are achievable within this life. He will not only share these same desires, moreover, but will

share the same understanding of them and his reasons for having them that the beloved, now a lover, has come to have, and so the same vision of himself and his soul, and his place in the wider order of the world and the heavens. And, because this lover, now his beloved, also desires to lead his beloved, now a lover, towards the greatest possible emulation of their shared god, and therefore to help him achieve his own greatest possible perfection of soul and philosophical recollection of the perfectly real beings, the lover, now beloved, not only desires all three of the same earthly aims for *himself* that the beloved, now a lover, has newly come to recognize as his own deepest earthly desires, but also desires them *for* the beloved. The beloved, now lover, then, emerges from his transformative experience of the first shock of love to find, already waiting for him, a lover, now beloved, who is wholly devoted to helping him achieve what he has newly come to recognize as his own most deeply held earthly desires.¹²⁸ And it is only at this point in their relationship, when the beloved has emerged from his struggle to interpret his experience of eros, having drawn the correct conclusions, and chooses, with the same self-awareness of what he most truly desires which the original lover had had in choosing him, to take the original lover as his own beloved, that the original lover comes to have as

¹²⁸ Or, at least, this is clearly so in the case of the first two such earthly desires: to recollect the perfect beings and to emulate his god. In the case of the third desire, to be close to another soul like that of his god, things seem slightly more complicated. Given that the lover desires, 1) to be close to the beloved, and 2) to himself emulate their shared god as closely as possible, and, further, that the kind of closeness to the beloved which he now desires is reciprocal, requiring that the beloved should also be close to him, it will follow that the lover desires that at least one set of sufficient conditions for the satisfaction of this third desire of the beloved's should obtain. That is, in desiring that the beloved should be close to him, and that he himself should become a soul as much as possible like that of their shared god, the lover desires a state of affairs in which the beloved's desire to be close to a soul like that of his god will be satisfied. Whether this comes to the same thing is questionable, and the question has caused many difficulties in the philosophy of both friendship and love, but it seems reasonable, at least, in the present context, to treat the two as coming close enough for our purposes.

a partner in love that which the original beloved had already had from the beginning:
another soul wholly devoted to helping him achieve his own greatest earthly good.

At the beginning of their relationship, then, the lover desired the greatest possible goods of this life not only for himself, but also for his beloved, but the beloved did not yet desire these goods for the lover, and desired them even for himself only confusedly, insofar as he did already recognize both virtue and knowledge as goods worth acquiring. The lover, then, desired deeply that the beloved should have that which was in fact best for him,¹²⁹ and which the beloved did, moreover, to some extent already desire for himself. But the beloved did not, in return, desire that the lover should have that which was best for him, or even that the lover's own desires should be satisfied. After the beloved's own experience of eros, however, this asymmetry in what each desires for the other has disappeared. The beloved, turned lover, now both understands and desires that which is in fact best for him every bit as much as the lover, now beloved, initially did. The original lover, then, now desires that his beloved should have not only that which is objectively speaking best for him, as he has from the beginning, but also that which his

¹²⁹ Again, though, the picture is in fact somewhat more complicated than this. Although Plato's later arguments seem clearly to assume that the lovers will desire what we have called the three 'otherworldly' goods for one another, as well as what we have called the three 'earthly' goods, none of the claims he explicitly makes seem to offer us arguments as to why this should be so. Insofar as what we have called the 'earthly' desires are not only analogous to the lovers' 'otherworldly' aims, however, but are also instrumentally related to them, such that the full satisfaction of these 'earthly' desires would seem to imply the satisfaction of the 'otherworldly' ones, it again seems to be the case that by desiring that one another's 'earthly' desires should be satisfied the lovers are also desiring that the sufficient conditions for the satisfaction of their 'otherworldly' desires should obtain. It may be, then, that Plato takes it to follow from the fact that the lovers desire the sufficient means to the satisfaction of one another's 'otherworldly' desires that they also desire that these desires should be satisfied. If this is so, however, then this is, again, a move which many contemporary readers might question. For present purposes, however, I would like to set such questions to one side.

beloved, now a lover, most deeply desires for himself, since what the original beloved most desires and what is in fact best for him will now coincide. The original beloved, in turn, in desiring what is in fact best for his beloved, the original lover, now also desires that the original lover should have that which *he* most desires. Each now desires for the other to have, then, that which the other most desires for himself, and in doing so desires, both for himself and the other, that which is genuinely best.

VII. From Love to Friendship

And, if one is a student of ancient philosophy, then all of this should be beginning to sound somewhat familiar. The themes emerging here in the *Phaedrus*' account of love are ones which play a central role in Aristotle's well known discussions of friendship in both his *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle initially defines friendship in terms of one's wishing one's friends to have that which one believes to be good:

We may describe friendly feeling towards any one as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about. A friend is one who feels thus and excites these feelings in return: those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends.¹³⁰

As he elaborates upon this idea, however, it begins to seem clear that, on his considered view, it is not enough for friends to wish one another that which they *believe* to be good, in this way; they must also, at least to some extent, wish that which is *actually* good for one another. Someone who is your friend, he goes on to argue, "shares your pleasure in

¹³⁰ Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. (New York: Random House, 2001) 2.4 1380b35-1381a4. Hereafter '*Rhetoric*.'

what is good, and your pain in what is unpleasant.”¹³¹ And, “since we all feel glad at getting what we wish for, and pained at getting what we do not,”¹³² a friend will wish for one to have one’s own wishes satisfied, when one wishes for that which is good. Friends will also be those “to whom the same things are good and evil... for in that case they must have the same wishes, and thus by wishing for each other what they wish for themselves, they show themselves each other’s friends.”¹³³ Although it seems ambiguous, here, whether those ‘to whom the same things are good and evil’ should be taken to mean those *who believe* the same things to be good and evil, or those *for whom* the same things are, in fact, good and evil, it seems that Aristotle intends to claim in the passage overall that those who are friends will be both of these things. Our friends, he argues, will be those “who think the things good which we think good, so that they wish what is good for us; and this, as we saw, is what friends must do.”¹³⁴ These arguments seem to assume, then, that there are, in fact, three things which our friends must wish for us: that which is good for us, that which they *believe* to be good for us, and that which *we* believe to be good for us. And these three things must coincide, at least as a rule, if a friendship is to be

¹³¹ *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a4-5.

¹³² *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a7-8.

¹³³ *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a8-12.

¹³⁴ *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a17-19.

practical.¹³⁵ Only if they do coincide do the arguments given above plausibly follow. If a friend ‘shares your pleasure in what is good,’ first of all, then it must be the case that you do take pleasure in that which is good. And since ‘we all feel glad at getting what we wish for, and pained at getting what we do not,’ it must then be the case that you also wish for that which is good, since if you did not wish for it, then getting it would bring you pain, rather than pleasure. And if your friend is to share this pleasure, then your friend must also wish, as you do for yourself, that you should have that which is good. Insofar as you and your friend both wish for you to have what is good, then, the wishes you have for yourself and the wishes your friend has for you will coincide. And, given Aristotle’s commitment to the claim that that which we wish for is that which we believe to be good, insofar as we wish for that which is in fact good, we will be correct in our beliefs about what is good. Since our friends are those who wish us to have that which they believe to be good, then, and your friend wishes you to have that which you believe to be good, and that which you believe to be good is in fact good, your friend will also believe to be good that which is in fact so. Without these intermediate steps, the final claim above, that it follows from the fact that we agree with our friends about what is good that our friends will ‘wish what is good for us’ seems like a non-sequitur. If we

¹³⁵ Or, at least, if a *good* friendship is. It seems possible, given Aristotle’s vacillation elsewhere over whether, and to what extent, the vicious can be said to be friends, that he might accept the possibility of a ‘friendship’ in which both parties shared the same false beliefs about what things were good for them. Such a friendship, however, would be harmful, rather than beneficial, to both parties, however well intentioned they might be in their actions towards each other. And this sort of a harmful relationship does not seem to be what Aristotle has in mind when he typically speaks of friendship, or in his discussion of it here, since he seems generally to be committed to the position that friendship is both beneficial and a good. C.F. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe. (New York: Oxford U.P., 2002.) 9.12 1171b37-1172a15. Hereafter ‘*Nicomachean Ethics*.’

supply the claim that our own beliefs about what is good for us are correct, however, we can begin to see how the argument is meant to follow. The argument that friends will wish ‘for each other what they wish for themselves,’ then, seems to turn on a further claim: that that which is good for us will also be good for our friends. And the thought behind this claim would seem to be something along the following lines. We can all be safely assumed to wish for what we believe to be good for ourselves. It has been argued that we will also wish for what we believe to be good for our friends. If that which we believed to be good for ourselves, and that which we believed to be good for our friends were different, however, then these two wishes might easily come into conflict, and we would be forced to choose between pursuing our own perceived good and pursuing that of our friends. Such a divergence between what we took to be in our own interest and what we took to be in theirs, then, would threaten our mutual well-wishing and trust. And the same will be true of our friends’ beliefs about what is in their interest and in ours. It will follow, then, that if our friendship is to be a stable one, we should each believe that that which is good for us is also good for the other. And, given what has been said above, that these beliefs should be true.

And it seems from Aristotle’s presentation of a similar account of the features of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, not as his own developed theory, but rather, as the *endoxa*, or received opinions, from which he intends his own arguments to begin, that this sort of an understanding of what constitutes a good friendship was already, at least to some extent, current in Greek culture at his time:

People take a friend to be someone who wishes for and does what is good, or appears good, for the sake of the other, or someone who wishes the friend to exist and to live, for the friend's own sake; Others take a friend to be someone who spends time with the other and makes the same choices, or who feels grief and pleasure with his friend.¹³⁶

Moreover, something very like these broad outlines of the features to be expected of friendship would seem to be operative at various junctures in Plato's own dialogues. In particular the claims that a friend will wish, and attempt to bring about, that which is good, or which he believes to be good, for his friend,¹³⁷ that a friend will share in the pleasure and grief of his friend,¹³⁸ that a friend will wish the same things for his friend's sake that he wishes for his own,¹³⁹ and that a friend will himself be a good and a benefit to his friend¹⁴⁰ all appear to be brought into play, in one form or another, by either Socrates or his interlocutors in the course of significant arguments. Whether or not he endorses these claims about what constitutes a friendship, then, Plato seems very clearly,

¹³⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4 1166a3-9.

¹³⁷ See, e.g., Polemarchus' suggestion in *Republic* II.332a that "friends owe it to their friends to do good for them," Socrates' claim in *Republic* III.413c4-5 that the guardians' "conviction that they must always do what they believe to be best for the city" is evidence of their *philia* for it, and Socrates' inference in *Lysis* 207d4-7 from the claim that Lysis' parents feel a strong *philia* for him to the claim that they "would like" for him "to be as happy as possible." Though it might be argued that the latter two examples are not cases of the specific sort of *philia* which interests us in a discussion of friendship, it seems reasonable to think that if *philia* in this somewhat wider sense implies such a concern for the well-being of its object, then *philia* in our narrower sense, as a specific variety of this broader kind of affection, will share this feature.

¹³⁸ This claim is implicit in Socrates' contentions in *Republic* V.462d6-e1 & V.464d3-4 that "whenever anything good or bad happens to a single one of its citizens" the people of the Kallipolis, and the guardians/ auxiliaries in particular, "will share in the pleasure or pain," and that they will all "as far as possible, feel pleasure and pain in unison," if we accept Vlastos' plausible reading of these features of the citizens' relationships with one another as intended to follow from the strong ties of *philia* which their way of life and upbringing are designed to foster among them (see Vlastos, 11-13, though I contest many of his more substantial claims as to the significance and nature of this *philia*).

¹³⁹ See, e.g., Socrates' claim in *Republic* III.412d4-5, that "Someone loves something most of all when he believes that the same things are advantageous to it as to himself," where the kind of 'love' in question is *philia*.

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., the exchange between Socrates and Polemarchus in *Republic* I.334b7-335a3, beginning with Socrates' question "Speaking of friends, do you mean those a person believes to be good and useful to him, or those who actually are good and useful, even if he doesn't think they are?" (*Republic* I.334b7-c2).

at least, to be aware of them. And in many cases it seems plausible to think that he does endorse such claims.¹⁴¹ It seems significant, then, that the point at which the language Plato chooses to employ in describing the relationship between the lover and beloved shifts from primarily that of eros to primarily that of *philia* is also the point at which their relationship first acquires many of these features most closely associated with friendship.

And, one of the most crucial of these features, it seems, the acquisition of which marks one of the clearest breaks from any previous stage of their relationship, is reciprocity. Such reciprocity is emphasized as a defining feature of friendship in both Aristotle's brief discussion in the *Rhetoric*, above, and his more extended treatment of the different kinds of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. And, although Plato seems clearly to think that *philia*, as such, need not be reciprocal, since one might also have such 'friendly feeling' towards abstract or corporate entities such as wisdom or one's polis, which need not be capable of returning it,¹⁴² it also seems quite plausible to think that he considers *philia* in the sense of 'friendship' to be a particular kind of *philia* in this broader sense, just as he has noted that the eros with which he is most centrally concerned in the palinode is that particular kind of eros which one feels towards other

¹⁴¹ This is obviously a claim which requires more support, but this is not the place to argue it fully. I believe, however, that a case can be made for Plato's endorsement of several of the above claims on the basis of his arguments in *Republic* Books III-V, which I take to rely on these claims to support the proposedly unifying effects of the *philia* cultivated among the guardians/auxiliaries of the Kallipolis by their education and communal lifestyle. It is my hope to make this case in a future paper.

¹⁴² At least, not presumably, although a case could be made that corporate entities such as a polis are capable of this.

persons,¹⁴³ rather than towards any other thing. And just as this particular kind of eros has its own distinctive features, it seems reasonable to think that this particular kind of *philia* will as well. Aristotle, of course, will make this argument explicitly: that although one can use the word *philia* to mean many different things, even speaking of the ‘love’ some people have for inanimate objects, such as wine,¹⁴⁴ in this way, this is clearly not the sort of love we mean when we use the word *philia* in the more specific sense of ‘friendship.’ Rather, “friendship, people say, is good will between reciprocating parties,”¹⁴⁵ as well as, he will go on to argue, a mutual recognition of this good will by both parties, and appropriate actions taken accordingly. Furthermore, as Julia Annas has argued persuasively, it seems as though this same conclusion, that the sort of *philia* we mean when we use the word to pick out anything resembling ‘friendship’ will require reciprocity of feeling, is suggested by Plato’s own, ostensibly aporetic, arguments in the *Lysis*.¹⁴⁶

The first aporia which Socrates claims to have generated on the topic of friendship in the *Lysis* centers on the question of who should be considered a friend, the person who loves or feels friendly feeling for someone, or the person for whom such love or friendly feeling is felt. And this question is explicitly posed, at the outset, with respect

¹⁴³ Specifically, towards ‘beautiful boys,’ by his initial characterization at *Phaedrus* 249e4 (see above, p.15) though, as we have seen, this characterization evolves significantly over the course of the palinode.

¹⁴⁴ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b27-32. Note, also, that this particular example, of the ‘love of wine,’ is one which had been previously used by Plato in the *Lysis*.

¹⁴⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b33-34.

¹⁴⁶ Annas, 532-533.

to that love or friendly feeling which is felt towards other persons: “when someone loves someone else, which of the two becomes the friend of the other, the one who loves, or the one who is loved?”¹⁴⁷ Socrates quickly leads Menexenus, Lysis’ closest friend, to agree that neither one who loves in this way without being so loved in return nor one who is so loved without also so loving can be rightly called a friend, since if either were the case, then one could easily become “a friend of a nonfriend, and even of an enemy”¹⁴⁸ or “an enemy to a nonenemy, or even to a friend.”¹⁴⁹ And this, Socrates maintains, “doesn’t make any sense at all... it is simply impossible to be an enemy to one’s friend and a friend to one’s enemy,”¹⁵⁰ as Menexenus readily agrees. The clear implication of the intuition on which this conclusion rests, then, that one cannot be ‘a friend of a nonfriend,’ is that each party to a friendship must be a friend of the other, if there is to be any such thing as a friendship at all. And when Socrates suggests the claim that friendship must be reciprocal as a possible answer to their worry about who will be a friend, proposing that “unless they both love each other, neither is a friend”¹⁵¹ so that “nothing is a friend of the lover unless it loves him in return,”¹⁵² Menexenus is initially inclined to agree. He is led to reject this claim only when Socrates introduces the question of whether one could then be truly said to be a ‘friend’ to the sorts of general or abstract things towards which one

¹⁴⁷ *Lysis* 212b1-2.

¹⁴⁸ *Lysis* 213c2.

¹⁴⁹ *Lysis* 213c-4.

¹⁵⁰ *Lysis* 213b2-4.

¹⁵¹ *Lysis* 212d4.

¹⁵² *Lysis* 212d6.

might be commonly said to feel *philia*, but which could not be reasonably said to feel it back:

So, there are no horse-lovers unless the horses love them back, and no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise-lovers. And no lovers of wisdom, unless wisdom loves them in return. But do people really love them even though these things are not their friends, making a liar of the poet who said:

*Happy the man who has as friends his children and
solid-hoofed horses,
his hunting hounds and a host abroad?*¹⁵³

Menexenus responds that he doesn't think this poet was a liar, and so the suggestion is dismissed, and their arguments move on. Notice, though, that this claim is only brought under suspicion at all by the introduction of worries beyond the scope of the original question, which was specifically about which of two *people* was a friend, when one of them loved the other. And even once these worries have been raised, Socrates puts forward a suggestion as to how they might be plausibly resolved: that when people are lovers of horses, or of wine, or of wisdom, or of other such things, they do in fact love these things, and this love is *philia*, of a sort, but not of that sort which is friendship, and 'these things are not their friends.' The only real argument offered against the claim that friendship is reciprocal, then, is that if it were correct, the cited piece of poetry would fail to be literally true, thus 'making a liar of the poet.' While Menexenus may find this a convincing argument, it seems highly unlikely that we are meant to, given what we know of Plato's attitudes towards poetry. Moreover, Socrates goes on to rely, without further comment, on the presumption that friendship is reciprocal, and seemingly symmetrically

¹⁵³ *Lysis* 212d8-e6. This part of the argument may seem especially strange to us, since it relies on a largely verbal point that the common Greek words for such things as 'horse-lover,' etc., were compounds involving *philia*: 'horse-lovers' above is '*philippoi*,' for example, 'wine-lovers' '*philoinoi*,' and 'lovers of wisdom' '*philosophoi*,' or 'philosophers.'

so, in his own later arguments, which take it as given that friends must “be prized by each other”¹⁵⁴ “value each other”¹⁵⁵ and “yearn for one another when apart.”¹⁵⁶ As Annas has pointed out,¹⁵⁷ these arguments clearly assume that to be a friend requires not only that one love, but also that one be loved, since, on the one hand, Socrates maintains that “whoever doesn’t love is not a friend,”¹⁵⁸ while, on the other, he asks Lysis, “how can anything be a friend if it is not prized?”¹⁵⁹ Clearly “it can’t,”¹⁶⁰ Lysis promptly replies, since, as Socrates argues, whatever someone “didn’t prize he wouldn’t love.”¹⁶¹ It seems that the case can be plausibly made, then, that Plato would accept reciprocity as one of the defining features of personal friendship.

Again, then, it does not seem accidental that a shift in Plato’s language, from primarily that of eros, to primarily that of *philia*, occurs at just that point in his account in the *Phaedrus* where the relationship between the lover and beloved first acquires any sort of reciprocity: the point at which the beloved first begins to feel affection for the lover, and chooses to allow him a place in his life as a trusted social intimate. That is, the point at which the beloved first ceases to be purely the object of the lover’s unilateral eros, and becomes, also, an active participant in what we have called the ‘pedagogical’ stage of

¹⁵⁴ *Lysis* 215a2.

¹⁵⁵ *Lysis* 215b13.

¹⁵⁶ *Lysis* 215b11.

¹⁵⁷ Annas, 533.

¹⁵⁸ *Lysis* 215b8.

¹⁵⁹ *Lysis* 215a5.

¹⁶⁰ *Lysis* 215a6.

¹⁶¹ *Lysis* 215b6.

their relationship. Having come to see how genuinely the lover appears to desire to help and to benefit him, we should remember from our arguments above, the beloved eventually decides to let ‘the man spend time with him.’¹⁶² And he makes this decision, Plato argues, ‘because he is by nature disposed to be a friend (*philos*) of the man who is serving him.’¹⁶³ He is so naturally ‘disposed,’ furthermore, towards those whom he believes to genuinely mean him well, it seems, even when he is *not* well disposed towards the prospect of an erotic relationship: “even if he has already been set against love by schoolfriends or others who say that it is shameful to associate with a lover.”¹⁶⁴ And once he has allowed the lover to ‘talk and spend time with him,’¹⁶⁵ he is even more deeply ‘amazed’¹⁶⁶ by the extent of the genuine ‘good will’¹⁶⁷ this person displays towards him in all of his behavior. And so he comes to realize, it seems, that this lover is not *only* a lover, and certainly not a ‘lover’ in the sense with which his ‘schoolfriends’ have no doubt made him familiar, a person who desires and pursues him with promises of benefit in order to win his favors, but who has no further interest in his well-being than this, the sort of lover criticized so effectively in Socrates’ and Lysias’ earlier speeches. Instead, he is a lover who is also a friend. And a friend, it seems, not independently of being a lover, but rather, as a consequence of being a lover, in that way which is most true

¹⁶² See above, p. 37; *Phaedrus* 255b1-2.

¹⁶³ See above, p. 37; *Phaedrus* 255a3-4.

¹⁶⁴ *Phaedrus* 255a4.

¹⁶⁵ See above, p. 38; *Phaedrus* 255b4.

¹⁶⁶ See above, p. 38; *Phaedrus* 255b5.

¹⁶⁷ See above, p. 38; *Phaedrus* 255b5.

to the divine nature of love: a ‘friend (*philon*) who is inspired by a god.’¹⁶⁸ As he comes to know the lover and his true intentions well, then, he is shocked to discover ‘that all the friendship he has from his other friends and relatives put together is nothing compared to’¹⁶⁹ the friendship of this lover who is also a friend. And notice, here, exactly where all of this language of ‘friendship’ begins to be deployed: the beloved is initially ‘disposed’ to be a friend to the person who is ‘serving’ him, and so begins to take the time to come to know him better, and to better understand the motives he may have for doing all of these good things for him. This disposition seems to become a reality, though, and the lover begins to be spoken of not only as his lover, but also as his friend, at the point at which the beloved comes to be fully aware of the extent of the ‘good will’ which the lover feels for him. And ‘good will,’ here, is ‘*eunoia*,’ the same ‘good will’ which we saw above in Aristotle’s report that ‘friendship, people say, is good will between reciprocating parties.’¹⁷⁰ Indeed, this ‘pedagogical’ stage of the relationship between the lover and beloved, as Plato describes it briefly here, seems to map fairly well onto one of the lesser sorts of friendship which Aristotle describes in his later account of the different kinds of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹⁷¹ For our purposes, though, we need only note here that several of the key features of friendship as Aristotle has argued above that many would define it, and as Plato himself seems to acknowledge that it might be

¹⁶⁸ See above, p. 38; *Phaedrus* 255b7.

¹⁶⁹ See above, p. 38; *Phaedrus* 255b5-7.

¹⁷⁰ See above, p. 73; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b33-34.

¹⁷¹ Specifically, friendship between unequals because of excellence or the good, see *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.13 1162a34-1162b14, c.f. 8.8 1159a34-1159b8.

plausibly defined, now seem to be in place between the lover and beloved, most crucially, reciprocity of both 'good will' and benefit.

The most significant break with all previous stages of their relationship, however, and the one on which Plato himself places the greatest emphasis, seems not to happen here, when the beloved enters into this 'pedagogical' relationship with the lover, but rather with the transition from this stage of their relationship to one of the two highest sorts of relationship in which Plato argues that eros can possibly result. The point at which the relationship between the lover and beloved is most drastically and significantly transformed seems clearly to be that at which the beloved in turn falls in love with the lover, and himself succeeds in correctly pursuing this love. It is the two sorts of relationship which can come from this transformation in the beloved's feelings for his lover, if he is able to correctly interpret and respond to them, which Plato argues will offer love's greatest rewards, those which are 'as great as divine gifts should be,'¹⁷² and which cannot be offered by any earlier stage of their relationship. While what we have called the 'pedagogical' stage of their relationship may be pleasant, harmless, and even mildly spiritually or philosophically rewarding, if the full benefits of eros are to be gained, Plato argues, their relationship must progress beyond this stage. This might initially lead us to dismiss the importance of the emphasis on friendship which we see beginning to emerge in Plato's description of this earlier stage of the relationship. To do so, however, would be a mistake. This new emphasis on the element of friendship

¹⁷² See above, p. 52; *Phaedrus* 256e4.

between the lover and beloved, which we see emerging here, with the shift in the beloved's role from that of a purely passive object, to that of an actively consenting, if still primarily receptive, participant, continues to be a significant feature of Plato's account of the two highest kinds of love, as the beloved's role shifts even further, from that of a primarily receptive participant, to that of a fully equal and active partner in a life lived together with the lover.

And it is in Plato's description of these two highest sorts of relationship in which eros can result that his shift to reliance on the language of *philia* become most telling. Though he relies again, as one would expect, primarily upon the language of eros in his description of the beloved's own experience of eros and his struggle to interpret and respond to it correctly, just as he had in describing the original lover's experience, once the beloved has emerged from this struggle largely victorious, as the original lover had, now able, as the original lover eventually was, to express his love with the appropriate 'reverence and awe,' Plato's emphasis on the language of *philia* returns. In the few lines describing the highest possible sort of relationship to which eros can lead, that of the 'philosophical pair,' who 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy' and live a life of 'bliss and shared understanding' on this earth, growing wings together after death, neither the language of *philia* nor that of eros is explicitly used.¹⁷³ When Plato turns to describing the second best sort of relationship, however, that of those who waver from

¹⁷³ See above, pp. 49-50; *Phaedrus* 256a7-b7.

this highest possible course of eros by putting ‘ambition in place of philosophy,’¹⁷⁴ he does so in terms of *philia*, while maintaining that this aspect of the description applies even more appropriately to the best sort of relationship than to this lesser one: ‘these two also live in mutual friendship (though weaker than that of the philosophical pair), both while they are in love and after they have passed beyond it.’¹⁷⁵ Those engaged in the highest sort of relationship to which eros can lead, then, the ‘philosophical pair,’ now ‘live in mutual friendship,’ just as this lesser pair does, but their friendship is stronger than that of this less ‘philosophical’ pair, and, presumably, just as, or even more, lasting. Most surprisingly, then, it seems to follow from this claim, in the case of the second-best sort of relationship at least, and most likely in that of the best sort as well, that this ‘mutual friendship,’ though born of eros, no longer depends on eros for its continued strength and stability: though the friendship begins ‘while they are in love,’ it can continue, undiminished, even ‘after they have passed beyond it.’

Moreover, the benefits conferred by this final stage of the relationship in either its best or its second-best form, in both this life and the afterlife, seem not to be attendant upon the continuation of eros, which may or may not persist, between the members of each ‘pair,’ after this stage in their relationship has been achieved, but rather upon this lasting and ‘mutual friendship’ which their shared experience of eros has forged. These two highest sorts of personal relationship, then, which Plato has argued will grant human

¹⁷⁴ See above, p. 51; *Phaedrus* 256c1.

¹⁷⁵ See above, p. 51; *Phaedrus* 256c7-d1.

beings the greatest possible benefits, are only indifferently erotic, after they have been attained. The importance of eros to this process, it seems, is largely as the means of attaining them. The benefits conferred by the highest sorts of life lived together, then, as such, are the benefits conferred by the highest sorts of friendship, not just the highest sorts of love.¹⁷⁶ And though such friendship may *also* be erotic, as time moves forward, it need not be. Nothing of significance is lost should the passion which brought these pairs together burn out. And, in the final passage of the palinode, where Socrates concludes his praise of love by returning briefly to the topic of the ‘non-lover’ of Lysias’ speech, to contrast the paucity of what such a person can offer with the rich possibilities of a rightly pursued love, he does so, quite pointedly, in the language of friendship.

While the sexually motivated quid-pro-quo of a “non-lover’s companionship

¹⁷⁶ I have made a slide, over the course of this paragraph, from speaking of the two highest forms of relationship in which eros can result to speaking of the two highest forms of relationship, full stop, and from claiming that these two highest forms of relationship in which eros can result are friendships to claiming that these two forms of friendship are friendship’s highest forms. While the reader would be right to be suspicious of this slide, no slight of hand is intended. I take these two moves to be justified to the following extent: although Plato does not explicitly claim that these two sorts of relationship are the highest sorts of personal relationship possible, he has argued that they are the sorts of personal relationship which provide the individuals engaged in them with the greatest possible benefits. And these are not only the greatest possible benefits which personal relationships can provide, he has claimed, but the greatest possible benefits which *anything* can provide to an embodied human being. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to think, given what has been argued, that Plato is attributing relative value to different sorts of personal relationship on the basis of two factors: 1) the benefits which they provide to their participants and 2) the intrinsically valuable and disvaluable features they possess. If this is correct, then it seems that in order for any sort of personal relationship to be a ‘higher’ one, in his estimation, than the two highest sorts of relationship described in the palinode, it would need to be so on the basis of some intrinsically more valuable or less disvaluable features it possessed, while still providing its participants with the same benefits as these two highest sorts of relationship resulting from eros. The defining features of these two highest sorts of relationship which Plato describes, however, would seem to be the very features which allow them to provide these benefits to their participants. While it is conceivable, then, that there might be other sorts of personal relationship or friendship which provided these same benefits to their participants on Plato’s view, it seems that these other sorts of relationship or friendship would need to resemble the two highest sorts of relationship described in the palinode in all of the defining features which we have discussed in order to do so. It seems reasonable, then, to move forward under the assumption that the highest forms of friendship, on his view, if not identical to those described here in the palinode, will at the very least resemble them in all of the immediately relevant respects.

(*oikeiotes*)”¹⁷⁷ he argues, can provide nothing more than “cheap, human dividends,”¹⁷⁸ all of the ‘divine gifts’ detailed in the palinode can be rightly hoped for from “a lover’s friendship (*philia*).”¹⁷⁹

VIII. Friendship in its Highest Forms

It seems that this final account of the two highest sorts of relationship in which eros can result, then, is not only an account of the best sorts of erotic relationship, but also of the best sorts of personal friendship. And given that it seems, from what we have said above, that the erotic and sexual elements of these two sorts of relationship have become largely indifferent, with their continuation or cessation having little effect upon the benefits offered to the participants in them by their continuing relations with each other, once this stage of their relationship has been reached, it seems that we should now ask what the features of these best kinds of relationship are, independently of the distinctively erotic characteristics which they may or may not continue to have. And if we examine the features of these two sorts of relationship as friendships, keeping in place all of the features they have come to have through the historical process of their participants’ eros, but abstracting away from anything exclusively erotic in their ongoing relationships with each other, we will find ourselves facing a surprisingly familiar description of the best sorts of personal friendship.

¹⁷⁷ *Phaedrus* 256e4-5: τοῦ μὴ ἐρῶντος οἰκειότης.

¹⁷⁸ *Phaedrus* 256e6.

¹⁷⁹ *Phaedrus* 256e3: ἐραστοῦ φιλία.

We will find, that is, that these two sorts of relationship, considered as friendships, share nearly all of the features most closely associated with the best sort of personal friendship described in Aristotle's account in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although the exact characteristics of this best sort of friendship, often referred to as 'virtue friendship' or 'character friendship' are widely debated, there are number of defining features, some shared with other kinds of friendship, and some unique to this one best kind, which are generally taken to be central to Aristotle's account. First of all, as we have already discussed somewhat above, all kinds of friendship, on Aristotle's view, and so this best kind as well, require some sort of "reciprocal loving of which both parties are aware,"¹⁸⁰ and a corresponding reciprocal good will or desire for the good of the other, on which each party is prepared to act wherever possible and appropriate.¹⁸¹ In every kind of friendship, then, and in this best kind as well, each party will provide, or at the very least desire and attempt to provide, some good or benefit to the other. In the case of this best kind of friendship, moreover, as in the case of many of the other broadly better kinds of friendship, that which each party provides to the other, and so that which each of them receives from the relationship, will also be of the same kind of good or benefit, and to a roughly similar degree. In these better kinds of friendship, then, and so in the best kind of friendship in particular, there will be both a qualitative and a quantitative equality in the benefits offered to each of the participants, so that "in all respects each party gets the

¹⁸⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156a8-9.

¹⁸¹ Although the nature and extent of this good will will vary among types of friendship, on Aristotle's view.

same or similar things from the other, which is an attribute friendship should have.”¹⁸²

Furthermore in the best kind of friendship, as it seems is not the case in any of the other kinds of friendship on Aristotle’s account, each of the friends is also himself, in his own person, a good and a benefit to the other, “for the good person, in becoming a friend, becomes a good for the person to whom he becomes a friend,”¹⁸³ “for the good are both good without qualification and of benefit to one another,”¹⁸⁴ and Aristotle will argue at length that the parties to this best kind of friendship must always themselves be good.

That such friends are a good to one another in this way is also a consequence of another unique feature of this best kind of friendship: that it, unlike any of the other kinds of friendship, is a mutual love based exclusively upon the features of the friends’ own characters, independently of any of their incidental traits, such as wealth, influence, or charm. Such friendships based exclusively upon the friends’ own characters, Aristotle argues, must be built, at least in large part, on a mutual admiration and respect felt by each party for the other on account of his personal virtue or excellence: “being friends because of excellence, and because of what the parties are in themselves”¹⁸⁵ each friend will love the other “by reference to the person he is.”¹⁸⁶ In this way “the good will be friends because of themselves; for they will be friends in so far as they are good.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸²*Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1156b34-35.

¹⁸³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.5 1157b33-35.

¹⁸⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b13-14.

¹⁸⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.10 1171a18-19.

¹⁸⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156a18.

¹⁸⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157b3-4.

Those who have truly bad characters, on the other hand, are unable to create or maintain such friendships on the basis of their characters alone, and “it is clear that the only ones who are friends because of themselves are the good; for the bad get no gratification from each other,”¹⁸⁸ except incidentally. Because such friends are friends ‘because of themselves,’ furthermore, and love one another because of their own most stable and lasting qualities, the friendships they forge on this basis will also be stable and lasting ones. While other sorts of friendship, and particularly, Aristotle argues, the traditional sorts of “erotic friendships”¹⁸⁹ characterized by the exchange of very different sorts of goods between very different and unequal parties, will be unstable and quick to dissolve, unlikely to last over the course of a lifetime, “friendships based on character – being for their own sake – do last,”¹⁹⁰ “for since their own attributes are lasting, so is their relationship to each other.”¹⁹¹

It is not, however, only virtue or excellence of character, assessed absolutely, on which such relationships are based, but rather, Aristotle argues, equality or similarity in such virtue or excellence. It is always, he maintains, to some extent true that “‘equality and similarity make amity’, and most of all the similarity of those similar in excellence,”¹⁹² and so “it is the friendship between good people, those resembling each

¹⁸⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157a19-20.

¹⁸⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.1 1164a3.

¹⁹⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.1 1164a12.

¹⁹¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.8 1159b5.

¹⁹² *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.8 1159b3-4.

other in excellence”¹⁹³ that will be the most “complete”¹⁹⁴ and the best. It is not only excellence of character, then, that brings such friends together, but also *similarity* of character: “for every kind of friendship is because of some good or because of pleasure, ...and in virtue of some sort of resemblance between the parties, and to this kind of friendship belong all the attributes mentioned, in virtue of what the friends are in themselves, since in this respect they are similar.”¹⁹⁵ And this similarity of character between friends of the best sort will be manifested in their sharing of the same values, aims, and pursuits, and of the same sorts of activity in which they take the greatest pleasure, and upon which they place the greatest emphasis in their lives, “for nothing is so characteristic of friends as living together... but it is not possible for people to spend their time with each other if they are not pleasant, and do not enjoy the same things.”¹⁹⁶ So, while “like-mindedness too is evidently a feature of friendship,”¹⁹⁷ and can be found to various extents in other kinds of friendship as well, it is notable in particular that “this sort of like-mindedness is found among decent people, ...both with themselves and with each other, ... they have the same objectives... and they wish for what is just and what is advantageous, and also make these their common aim.”¹⁹⁸ It will be most natural and easiest, then, for the good and the decent to ‘live together’ in the way that close friends

¹⁹³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b7-8.

¹⁹⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b8.

¹⁹⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b19-23.

¹⁹⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.5 1157b19-24.

¹⁹⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.6 1167a22.

¹⁹⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.6 1167b4-9.

desire, and, furthermore, most mutually beneficial for them to do so, since those activities which they value most highly and devote themselves to most consistently will be virtuous ones, which will in turn help to maintain and develop their virtue of character, “and whatever it is that for each sort of person constitutes existence, or whatever it is for the sake of which they choose to live, it’s this they wish to spend time doing in company with their friends... each kind spending their days together in doing whichever of the things in life most satisfies them.”¹⁹⁹

This best sort of friendship, then, will both require and foster a deep knowledge and understanding of each friend’s character by the other, if each is to love the other for the sake of his character, and to be right in doing so. And so, “this type of friendship also requires that the parties have acquired experience of each other, and a close acquaintance with one another’s character, which is very difficult to achieve.”²⁰⁰ This knowledge of each other’s character will naturally grow over the course of their friendship with each other as well, as they spend their time “living together, conversing, and sharing their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by ‘living together’ where human beings are concerned.”²⁰¹ This knowledge of each other’s character, in turn, will foster not only love, but also trust, between them, since they will know one another to be both good and trustworthy, with the confidence one rightly has in one’s judgements “about a

¹⁹⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.12 1171b37-1172a6.

²⁰⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.6 1158a14-16.

²⁰¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.9 1170b12-14.

person one has scrutinized oneself over a long period.”²⁰² It will also allow each of them to offer greater help, comfort, and pleasure to the other than they would have been able to do without the aid of this knowledge, since in all of their conversations with and actions towards each other they “will know the character of the person affected, and the things that give him pleasure and pain,”²⁰³ and choose the most appropriate course accordingly. Moreover, through their interactions they will not only come to know each other’s characters well, but will also gain insight into their own characters, and develop both their own and their friend’s virtue further through emulation of one another’s better qualities and correction of one another’s failings, as well as through shared endeavor towards virtuous activity: “for the good man, in so far as he is good, delights in actions in accordance with excellence, and is disgusted by those flowing from badness,”²⁰⁴ so that good men who are friends “become better by being active and correcting each other, for they take each other’s imprint in those respects in which they please one another.”²⁰⁵

If we have made our case well, then each of these defining features of Aristotle’s much-discussed ‘virtue friendship’ should by this time find an obvious parallel among those which have emerged from our analysis of the evolving relationships between Plato’s two most successful ‘pairs’ of lovers or friends in the *Phaedrus*. Furthermore, on at least one plausible reading of Aristotle’s claim that a friend of this best sort “is to his

²⁰² *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157a22-23.

²⁰³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.11 1171b4-5.

²⁰⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.9 1170a8-10.

²⁰⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.12 1172a12-14.

friend as he is to himself (for his friend is another self),”²⁰⁶ such that “friendship in its superior form resembles one’s love for oneself,”²⁰⁷ this will also be true of the parties to these two highest kinds of relationship in the palinode. Insofar as they are of the same character, share the same aspirations, know one another’s souls as they know their own, desire the same goods for one another that they desire for themselves, take pleasure in one another’s goods and successes in the way that they take pleasure in their own, and consider one another’s goods integral to their own well-being in much the same way as those goods which accrue to them more directly, each of the members of Plato’s two ‘pairs’ of friends or lovers will love and relate to the other in much the same way that he does himself.²⁰⁸

There is a crucial element of Aristotle’s account of the best kind of friendship, however, which is conspicuously absent from these two best kinds of friendship as described by Plato. As we saw above, in Aristotle’s initial definition of friendship in the *Rhetoric*, he makes a point of claiming that when you are truly a friend to someone, you desire that which you believe to be good for that person ‘not for your own sake but for his,’ and this apparent contrast, between that which one desires for one’s own sake, and that which one desires for the sake of one’s friend, is generally taken to be a central element of his account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well.²⁰⁹ We have

²⁰⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4 1166a31-32.

²⁰⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4 1166b1-2.

²⁰⁸ And this point might bear even more emphasis if one is drawn to the first reading offered above of the way in which the original beloved might be said to see himself in his lover ‘as in a mirror.’

²⁰⁹ See, e.g. Vlastos, 3-6; Whiting.

already seen this aspect of his account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* appear above in his recounting of what ‘people take a friend to be’: someone who wishes the good, or apparent good, of his friend ‘for the sake of the other,’ or ‘for the friend’s own sake.’ This provision appears elsewhere in the account as well, and often in the context of the ways in which the best kind of friends’ love for one another is like the love which they have for themselves, for example, in the claim that “the one who is most a friend is the friend who wishes good things for the one for whom he wishes them, for the other’s sake, even if no one will know; and these features belong most to oneself in relation to oneself....”²¹⁰ Though we have seen, then, that Aristotle sometimes uses similar wording in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to mean something very different from what it would appear to mean in the *Rhetoric* passage, as when he claims above, for example, that the love which one feels for one’s friends is ‘for their own sake’ when it is ‘based on character,’ insofar as one then loves them ‘because of themselves,’ and so ‘for the sake of’ the persons who they most essentially are, it seems clear that he also deploys this sort of wording in a sense very much like that with which he used it in the *Rhetoric*.

²¹⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.8 1168b2-5.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, then, there seem to be (at least) two importantly different senses of ‘for their own sake’ at work in Aristotle’s account.²¹¹ On the one hand, there is a sense of ‘for their own sake’ in play with which the natural contrast would be something like ‘for the sake of their political connections,’ or ‘for the sake of their dinner parties,’ or even, it seems, ‘for the sake of their pleasant sense of humor.’ Here, it seems that ‘for the sake of’ is being used to pick out those things about the friends in question on account of which one feels affection for them or chooses to be their friend, those things about them by which one is motivated to pursue or maintain a friendship with them. And in *this* sense of ‘for their own sake’ it seems that the two best sorts of friendship which we see in the *Phaedrus* are as much ‘for the friend’s own sake’ as Aristotle’s own best kind of friendship, insofar as these two best sorts of friendship are equally based on the most essential aspects of each party’s own character. But there is also a sense of ‘for the friend’s own sake’ in play in the *Ethics* which, as in the *Rhetoric*, invites a contrast, instead, with that which is ‘for *your* own sake,’ or perhaps even ‘for the sake of’ other people or entities in which one takes an interest, such as one’s family or polis.²¹² This sense of ‘for the sake of’ would seem to be indicating something more like

²¹¹ For helpful discussion of the different ways in which Aristotle employs this expression (and the several Greek expressions it commonly translates) in his accounts of friendship see Michael Pakaluk. *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction*. (New York: Cambridge U.P., 2005) 263-271; Kelly Rogers. “Aristotle on Loving Another for His Own Sake.” *Phronesis*, 39.3 (1994): 291-302, especially 291-293; Whiting, 283-287; & Jennifer Whiting. “Eudaimonia, External Results, and Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65.2 (Sep. 2002): 274-276. See also Jennifer Whiting. “Impersonal Friends.” *The Monist*, 74.1 (Jan. 1991): 3-29, where I take one significant thread in her argument to be that these seemingly different uses of the expression are in fact much more closely related than they initially appear.

²¹² See, e.g., acting “for the sake of” one’s “fatherland” at *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.8 1169a20.

the person (or entity) on whose behalf, or for whose benefit, one takes oneself to act, or to feel, as one does. And it is *this* sense of the claim that one's goodwill or love for one's friend, in the best kind of friendship, must be 'for the friend's own sake,' with its implied contrast, which brings into play the much fraught debate over the respective roles of 'egoism' and 'altruism' in Aristotle's theory of friendship, and in the ethics of friendship in general, and the related (and sometimes conflated) debate over whether the best sort of friend, either in Aristotle's theory or in matter of ethical fact, may value his friend's good, or even his friend, instrumentally, or only as a final good. Though this is a debate too sweeping to engage with in any detail here, it is worth noting, I think, that Plato does not feel the need to explicitly draw such a contrast in the *Phaedrus*, despite drawing a very clear distinction between those who genuinely do desire the good of those for whom they feel eros, and those who are merely willing to promote that good insofar as it is an effective means to achieving their other desires, without taking any further interest in it. And, while this is a point which would likely require its own paper to argue convincingly, I would like to at least suggest here that this difference between Plato's approach and Aristotle's is not an insignificant one. Nor, I think, does it reflect a simple failure on Plato's part to consider a problem of which Aristotle was more fully aware.

I would like to suggest, rather, that Plato's lack of attention to this question in the *Phaedrus* is tied to his commitment elsewhere to the claim that final and instrumental value are by no means incompatible, and, furthermore, that a given individual may simultaneously value a given thing both instrumentally and as an end, without his

ascription to it of one kind of value in any way diminishing his ascription to it of the other. In fact, as one may recall from the well-known passages in Book II of his *Republic*, Plato has seemed to endorse the view that “the finest goods,”²¹³ those which we both do and should value most highly, are of the “kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it – knowing, for example, and seeing.... We welcome such things, I suppose, on both counts.”²¹⁴ He will go on, in the *Republic*, to argue that justice, and all the other virtues, are of this kind of good: such that we naturally value them both for their own sake and for the sake of their consequences, that is, both as final and as instrumental goods. And to value things in this way, it seems, is on his view to value them *more* highly, not less so, than those things to which we ascribe exclusively final value, such as “joy... and all the harmless pleasures that have no results beyond the joy of having them.”²¹⁵ If we take this claim seriously, then, it seems that much of the debate over how one should value the friend and his good, and, consequently, the related debate over the roles of egoism and altruism in such relationships, will need to be re-framed in a Platonic context. And, by taking this claim seriously, we can begin to see a principled motivation for the seemingly curious lack of priority in the various goods of the world of the soul depicted in the palinode, where, as we have seen, each of the central goods in the soul’s un-embodied existence would seem to be treated simultaneously as an independently desirable end and as a means to the achievement and maintenance of the

²¹³ *Republic* II.358a1.

²¹⁴ *Republic* II.357b9-c2.

²¹⁵ *Republic* II.357b5-7.

others, as well as for the corresponding lack of clear priority in Plato's depiction of the lover's motivations for pursuing a relationship with his beloved.

We may also, I think, begin to see a response to yet another of the supposed aporiai about friendship generated by Socrates in the *Lysis*. How can it be, he there asks Menexenus, that anyone or anything can be truly called a 'friend,' except for "some first principle,"²¹⁶ "for the sake of which we say that all the rest are friends too."²¹⁷ If "whoever is a friend.... has to be a friend to someone.... for the sake of something,"²¹⁸ he argues, and this 'something' will itself be a 'friend' as well, then "the friend is friend of its friend for the sake of a friend,"²¹⁹ and this regress can hardly go on forever. So, eventually, some "first friend"²²⁰ must be reached, "which will no longer bring us back to another friend."²²¹ But wouldn't it then be the case, he suggests, that "all the other things that we have called friends for the sake of that thing may be deceiving us, like so many phantoms of it, and that it is the first thing which is truly a friend?"²²² If this picture has things right, he argues, then "the real friend is surely that in which all these so-called friendships terminate,"²²³ in which case "the real friend is not a friend for the sake of a

²¹⁶ *Lysis* 219d1.

²¹⁷ *Lysis* 219d2-3.

²¹⁸ *Lysis* 218d5-9.

²¹⁹ *Lysis* 219b4.

²²⁰ *Lysis* 219d2.

²²¹ *Lysis* 219d1-2.

²²² *Lysis* 219d5-8.

²²³ *Lysis* 220b2-3.

friend.”²²⁴ Rather, it seems, it will turn out that only the good itself is a ‘real friend,’ since only the good is not “prized and loved”²²⁵ for the sake of any other thing. To reach this conclusion, however, Socrates has implicitly generated a dichotomy between that which is ‘prized and loved’ as a final good, and that which is ‘prized and loved’ as an instrumental good or ‘for the sake of’ some other thing, such that Menexenus is led to infer that these two ways of loving or valuing any given thing are mutually exclusive and exhaustive.²²⁶ If we take the above claim from *Republic* Book II, seriously, however, then this is a dichotomy that Plato rejects. And without this dichotomy, the supposed aporia which Socrates goes on to generate from the conclusion that only the good is a friend will fail to follow. We have several good reasons, then, it seems, to give this claim further attention in the context of Plato’s views on interpersonal friendship and love.

²²⁴ *Lysis* 220b5.

²²⁵ *Lysis* 220d3.

²²⁶ The example which Socrates deploys to secure Menexenus’ agreement that we do not in fact love those things which we ‘love’ for the sake of something else, but only that thing for the sake of which we love them, is of items clearly valued *exclusively* as means or instrumental goods: the wine which a man believes will save his poisoned son, and the wineskin and cup required to administer it (*Lysis* 219d8-220a2). It seems clear in this example that the man *truly* loves only his son, not the wine, wineskin, or cup, and Socrates leads Menexenus to generalize from this intuition to the claim that nothing is truly loved if it is loved for the sake of something else, presumably by way of an implicit conflation of the claim that that which is loved for the sake of something else is not truly loved with the claim that that which is loved *only* for the sake of something else is not truly loved. But this latter move can only be valid on the assumption that all things which are loved for the sake of something else are loved *only* for the sake of something else, an assumption which we have seen that we have reason to think Plato rejects. Furthermore, Socrates’ use of a man’s love for his son as the example of ‘true’ love in this case serves to highlight the problem with this assumption in the context of the *Lysis* as a whole, since his initial conversation with Lysis had seemed to suggest that fathers (and mothers), in particular, should be taken to love their sons for the sake of other things.

IX. The Philosophical Friends

Leaving aside, for the moment, though, discussion of the ways in which Plato's two highest sorts of friend in the *Phaedrus* may or may not be said to love each other 'for the sake of the other,' or to wish one another's good 'for the friend's own sake,' it seems that a different contrast with Aristotle's later account may offer us a useful insight into the nature of these two highest relationships described by Plato. Although both of these two highest sorts of relationship on Plato's account share nearly all of the most important features of Aristotle's 'virtue friendship,' and, it seems, to an equivalent extent, on Aristotle's account the possession of these features is treated as sufficient to identify a friendship as one of the highest possible sort, while on Plato's account one of these two kinds of friendships is seen as significantly superior to the other, not only in quality, but in kind. And this is because, Plato has argued, although both of these friendships share all of the features we have noted in common with Aristotle's 'virtue friendship,' as well as the others which we have briefly discussed above, in the highest kind of friendship the pair of friends 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy' in their life lived together, whereas in the second-best kind they instead have 'ambition in place of philosophy,' as in some sense filling the same central role. And this single difference, it seems, is conceived of as deeply affecting the overall natures of these two kinds of friendship, despite all the rest they have in common. Plato's explanation of this crucial difference, however, is frustratingly brief. What are we to take it to *mean*, for the nature of these two kinds of friendship, that the parties engaged in them 'follow ... philosophy,' or put

ambition in its place? What exactly *is* the ‘place’ of philosophy in the life of the ‘philosophical pair,’ which is somehow usurped by ‘ambition’ in the lesser pair’s case? While there does also seem to be a difference in the centrality of the specifically sexual aspects of these two pairs’ relationships, Plato casts this difference as a *consequence* of the difference between the roles that philosophy and ambition play in their respective lives together, and the resultant differences in their personal characters, rather than in any way a *cause* of the important differences between their two relationships or ways of life. If we are to find an explanation for the superiority of one of these kinds of friendship to the other, then, it seems that we must look for it in the respective roles philosophy and ambition play in the shared lives of the friends.

As a first attempt we might take the claim that the ‘philosophical pair’ ‘follow the assigned regimen of philosophy’ to mean that they live their shared life together in that way which is ‘assigned’ by philosophy, that is, in that way in which philosophy dictates or directs that they should do. To say this much, however, does little to reduce the ambiguity implicit in the claim, since there are still at least two fairly obvious interpretations we might give of what this means. On the one hand, we might take it to mean that they live their life together in accordance with a ‘regimen’ the specifications of which are contained in or implied by philosophy, where ‘philosophy’ is conceived of as a body of knowledge from which practical rules or recommendations for conduct can be drawn or inferred. On this reading Plato would be claiming that the ‘philosophical pair’ live their lives in accordance with a ‘regimen’ dictated by philosophy in much the same

way in which we might ordinarily say that someone lives his life in accordance with a 'regimen' dictated by medicine, that is, according to that way of life which medicine, understood as a body of knowledge both containing and implying certain practical rules or recommendations, tells him, or allows him to see for himself, is the best or most appropriate way for him to live. One might think, then, on this reading of the claim, that for the 'philosophical pair' to live in accordance with the 'regimen of philosophy,' is simply for them to live their life in that way which is prescribed for them as best by the new knowledge of themselves and their place in the cosmos which they have gained through their revelatory recollections and experience of eros. If this is the way we should read the claim, however, then it seems that the majority of the important progress which the 'philosophical pair' will make during their time spent together has already *been* made by the time that they have reached this final stage of their relationship, during the initial, turbulent, course of their eros. It is through this process, after all, of their initial erotic 'possession' and struggle to make sense of and respond to it correctly, that they have come to have their transformational insights into the natures of their own souls, the souls of the gods, and the world of the perfectly real beings, as well as to forge the psychic concord in themselves which will allow them to reliably implement the lessons of these insights in the course of their future lives. Viewed in this way, the continuing relationship between the 'philosophical pair' after this final stage of their relationship has been reached looks relatively unimportant, more like an extended period of resting on their laurels won in love than like a highly laudable or fruitful form of interaction in its own

right. The philosophical and ethical significance of their lifelong friendship, then, would seem to be secondary, on this reading, to that of the briefer period of intense eros through which it was formed. Even if we leave aside, however, the more general question of whether it would be appropriate to think of ‘philosophy,’ in the context of the *Phaedrus*, in this way, as referring to a given body of knowledge which one might come to have through various philosophical activities, reading the claim in this way would leave us with a much more obvious problem: if the ‘place’ of ‘philosophy’ in the life of this highest pair of friends is that of a newly-learned body of knowledge from which they can infer practical guidance as to how to live their lives, then in what plausible sense could ‘ambition’ come to occupy this ‘place’? ‘Ambition’ would hardly seem to be the sort of thing which could be thought of as constituting a body of knowledge, analogous to medicine or other such arts, from which one might draw or infer practical guidance. If we are to preserve the parallel which Plato draws, then, between the ‘place’ of philosophy in the life of the ‘philosophical pair’ and that of ‘ambition’ in the life of the lesser pair of friends, then it seems we must read this claim in a different way.

Fortunately, the second most obvious way in which we might read this claim seems more promising in this respect. And this second reading would also seem to be suggested by the language of the passage itself. The word translated as ‘ambition’ in the passage above is *philotimia*, which could also be translated as ‘love of honor,’ just as ‘philosophy’ could be translated as ‘love of wisdom.’ The parallel roles which ‘philosophy’ and ‘ambition’ play in the lives of the greater and lesser pair of friends, then,

are each being played by a certain kind of love, and, moreover, by a certain kind of *philia*. Where ‘ambition’ has taken the place of ‘philosophy’ in the lives of the lesser pair of friends, then, what has happened would seem to be much more clear: the role most appropriately played in the life of the friends by the love of wisdom has come to be played by the love of honor instead, and so the same ‘place’ which the love of wisdom fills in the life of the best kind of friends has come to be occupied by the love of honor in the lesser pair’s case. On this sort of reading, it seems, ‘philosophy’ is not meant to refer to a body of knowledge and its associated applications, but rather to something much more like a system of values or motivations, in much the same way that ‘ambition’ typically does. And this reading would be very much in holding with the sorts of claims we are accustomed to hearing from Plato’s Socrates, that to be a philosopher is to value, love, and pursue wisdom, rather than to have it entirely.²²⁷ The way in which ‘philosophy’ directs the best pair of friends towards its ‘assigned regimen’ in their life together, then, would be less analogous to the way in which we might ordinarily say that something like medicine does this than the way in which we might ordinarily say that something like health-consciousness does. Just as the love of health and desire to be healthy would lead the individuals who had it to live their lives in certain ways, according to that ‘regimen’ which they took to best advance them in the pursuit of their goal of good health, both for themselves and, potentially, for others, the love of wisdom, or of honor, would likewise lead the individuals who had them to live their lives in those ways, or

²²⁷ See, e.g., *Phaedrus* 278d4-6; *Lysis* 218a4-b3.

according to those ‘regimens,’ which they took to best advance them in their pursuits of wisdom and of honor, respectively. The ‘place’ of philosophy in the lives of the best kind of friends, then, would be that of a shared value, aim, or guiding principle, according to the pursuit and glorification of which they ordered and organized their shared life together. The crucial difference between the best and the second-best kinds of friendship, then, would be a difference in the highest shared value, the shared passion, pursuit, or project, according to which these two respective kinds of friends organized their common life. Where the shared life of the ‘philosophical pair’ would be one devoted to a common passion for and collaborative pursuit of wisdom, the shared life of the lesser pair would be one devoted to a common passion for and collaborative pursuit of honor instead.²²⁸

And on this reading it does not seem to be the case that the most important work of the friends’ lives together has already been done by the time that they reach this highest stage of their relationship. Rather, the benefits offered by the course of their eros have provided them with the foundations on which to build, in the best of such friendships, an ongoing, collaborative, pursuit of wisdom, throughout the rest of their lives and beyond. Their revelatory recollections of the worlds of the souls and the perfectly real beings have provided them with a desire for wisdom which they had formerly lacked (or at least failed to consciously recognize) by offering them a new

²²⁸ Plato does not specifically address in the *Phaedrus* what such a shared life of pursuing honor might be like, in contrast to that of pursuing philosophy. It is an interesting question to ask, however, since this account would seem to imply that such a life would not be a bad one, and might very well be positively virtuous in many ways, although inferior to that of the philosophical pair. I hope to explore this question further in a future paper.

awareness of the existence of a world of pure truth beyond the margins of their ordinary experience, as well as of their own capacity to know this world through the direct perceptions of their un-embodied souls and their resulting ability to recollect its truths during their current, embodied, lives, while simultaneously opening their eyes to the otherworldly joys of their un-embodied souls and so to their own deep and inborn desires to draw as close as they possibly can to the truths and perfections of these transcendent worlds. The psychic concord which they have created and learned to maintain through their successful struggles with the initial violence of their eros, moreover, has provided them with the stability of character and rule of reason in their souls which they will need if they are to reliably follow the courses of action and overall way of life towards which the rational parts of their souls direct them as those most conducive to their pursuit of wisdom, as well as most in holding with the demands of wisdom itself, insofar as they may come to have it, and with the honor and respect which they owe to wisdom, in all of its manifestations, as something they both value highly and know to be 'divine.' In addition to this newfound understanding of and desire for wisdom, furthermore, and the necessary stability and responsiveness of soul required in order to pursue this newfound desire, their experiences of eros have also provided them with two further resources on which to rely in their ongoing pursuit of wisdom: the first of these, in holding with what has been gradually emerging as a unifying theme in the *Phaedrus*, is the insight they have been granted into the natures of their own individual souls, both as souls of a given type, and as particularly positioned instances of that type, and the second, it now seems

plausible to claim, is the partner and aid in the project of philosophy which they have gained in the person of their lover turned friend.

X. Friendship and the Nature of Philosophy

But here we come up against what would appear to be a confusion in our argument. Haven't we argued above that the 'philosophical' type of soul is one among the immutable 'divine' types into which souls are to be divided according to the god 'in whose chorus they danced' in heaven? Are not the 'philosophers' among us, that is, to be identified not with the most accomplished of the souls belonging to each of these 'divine' types of soul, as it seems that our 'philosophical pair' are, but rather with the most accomplished among those souls who are naturally followers of Zeus? Fortunately for our argument, it seems that the answer to this question is both more complex, and much more interesting, than we might initially be led to expect. It would seem, in fact, that Plato's account in the *Phaedrus* provides us with two different senses in which human beings might be rightly called philosophers: first if they are true lovers and pursuers of wisdom, as the members of our 'philosophical pair' now are, and, second, if they are both this and practitioners of the art of dialectic, which constitutes the most systematic and universal means of effecting such pursuit. It is in the second sense, I would like to claim, that only the most accomplished followers of Zeus are properly to be called philosophers, while in the first sense a sufficiently accomplished soul of any of the many 'divine' types may also deserve this name.

Recall, above, in our discussion of the ways in which the beloved might initially come to see ‘himself in the lover as in a mirror,’ the parallel we drew between the activity of the lover during the early, ‘pedagogical,’ stage of their relationship, and the activity of which Plato has argued, in the second half of the *Phaedrus*, that true rhetoric, insofar as there is such a thing, must be the art: that of ‘directing the soul by means of speech.’ We had begun, in that discussion, to see a unifying theme emerging between the discussion of love in the first part of the *Phaedrus* and the discussion of rhetoric in its second part: an emphasis on the crucial importance to both of these endeavors of the knowledge of souls. While both the successful progress of their love and the advancement of their own personal virtue depends, for the lovers, in large part on the developing insight into the natures of their own and one another’s souls which they have gained through their experience of love, the art of the true rhetorician, by Plato’s later arguments, can only be the art of understanding the natures of *all* human souls – their various types and the ways in which these types will manifest themselves in the behavior of individuals here in this world – and so the ways in which various individuals will respond, in various contexts, to various kinds of attempts at persuasion. The true rhetorician, that is, must, on this view, be an expert psychologist, able to deeply understand, and so to effectively ‘direct,’ or manipulate, the soul of any individual whom he encounters. The successful lover, on the other hand, must possess only a very specific portion of the knowledge and skill which the true rhetorician must have: he must understand the natures and particular manifestations not of all types of souls and their many variations, but only of that one

type of soul which he and his beloved share, and the ways in which it manifests in their two particular cases. It seems, however, as though this parallel between the art of the true rhetorician and the activity of our successful lovers has been gradually effaced as they have moved beyond this ‘pedagogical’ stage of their relationship and into the equal partnership in life which they now share. The parallel between the activity of the true lover and the art of the true rhetorician, that is, would seem to depend in large part upon the asymmetry between the lover and beloved which has now disappeared. The true lover, during the pedagogical stage of their relationship, ‘directed’ the soul of his beloved towards greater understanding and virtue on the basis of the knowledge which he himself had newly gained through his experience of love, but which the beloved did not yet share. Once the beloved has himself become a lover, however, and achieved a position of parity with the original lover in respect to such knowledge, it seems that the time for unilateral ‘directing’ is over. Once the pair have reached this stage of their relationship, however, it seems that we can start to see an even more important parallel beginning to emerge: that between the activity in which the ‘philosophical pair’ are now engaged together, and the activity of which dialectic is the art.

True rhetoric, Plato has Socrates argue in the second half of the *Phaedrus*, the art of ‘directing the soul by means of speech,’ is an art that can only be fully mastered as a “side effect”²²⁹ of studying the much broader art of “dialectic.”²³⁰ Dialectic, in turn, he

²²⁹ *Phaedrus* 274a1.

²³⁰ *Phaedrus* 266c9.

defines as the art of making proper “divisions and collections”²³¹ of any given subject into the appropriate natural kinds, and ranging the various elements of that subject correctly under their true definitions and the true definitions of the kinds to which they belong, so as to come to understand not only the true natures of the things being studied, but also of their relationships to one another.²³² This art, he argues, is required not only for coming to systematically and comprehensively understand the various types of souls and of speech, as the true rhetorician must, but for coming to systematically and comprehensively understand any subject at all. As an art of understanding, then, and not just of speech, dialectic, when practiced in speech, need not simply serve to impart to another information which the practitioner of the art already has. Rather, where rhetoric alone, at its very best, can serve only to convey knowledge (or perhaps even only true belief) from the rhetorician to the listener, dialectic can be used to *create* new knowledge, not only in an interlocutor, but in the dialectician himself. It is an art not only of speaking, Plato argues, but of *thinking* as well, and those who pursue it do so in order that they “may be able to think and to speak.”²³³

Where dialectic is employed in the composition of speeches, then, Plato implies that it need not serve only to present a position upon which the composer of the speech has already decided. Rather, the reasoning employed in producing such a speech may itself be a means by which the truth of the matter is “discovered,” or by which the

²³¹ *Phaedrus* 266b3-4.

²³² See *Phaedrus* 265d1-266c2.

²³³ *Phaedrus* 266b4.

dialectician and his audience together are “led” closer to discerning that truth.²³⁴ The distinctive practice of this art, he argues, is first and foremost that of “seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind, so that by defining each thing we can make clear the subject,”²³⁵ while at the same time being careful “to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints, and... not to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do.”²³⁶ Recall here, however, the claim which we saw Plato make at the very beginning of the palinode to love, that every human being ‘must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity,’²³⁷ and that this “process is the recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god.”²³⁸ In light of this claim, the process of ‘collection and division’ which Plato describes for us here as the distinctive task of dialectic – bringing many scattered things together under the unifying definition of a single general kind, while carefully dividing up all such general kinds along their ‘natural joints’ until we “reach something indivisible”²³⁹ – looks very much like a systematic way of engaging in just such a process of recollection. The art of dialectic, then, would be the art of systematically employing the resources provided to us by our natural ability to understand the ‘general forms’ required for the use of language in order to provoke

²³⁴ See *Phaedrus* 266a.

²³⁵ *Phaedrus* 265d4-6.

²³⁶ *Phaedrus* 265e1-3.

²³⁷ See above, p. 14; *Phaedrus* 249b6-c2.

²³⁸ *Phaedrus* 249c2-3.

²³⁹ *Phaedrus* 277b8.

further or more precise recollections of the corresponding general truths which our souls came to know in their travels with god. And if this is the essence of the art of dialectic, provoking recollection in the soul in this way through the systematic use of language, then it is in principle equally well suited to doing so either in the soul of the dialectician himself or in the souls of others.

Where the dialectician has applied his dialectic to achieve a systematic understanding of souls, then, that is, where he has become a true rhetorician as well, he will be able to employ his dialectic to provoke recollection not only in the souls of other people who are much like himself, and so likely to be moved towards recollection by the same sorts of uses of language which are likely to move him, but also in the souls of anyone with whom he is able to engage in speech. And from this, perhaps, we can begin to see at least one motivation for Socrates' rather puzzling condemnation of writing in the midst of Plato's own written work. Such a dialectician, as it seems we must take Socrates himself to be, will have a keen awareness of the inevitable limitations of even the best sort of writing: a written work, once committed to paper, is incapable of adapting itself to the souls of its individual readers, "it continues to signify just that very same thing forever.... reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not."²⁴⁰ A living dialectician, on the other hand, in his role as a true rhetorician, can "determine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul... and offer a

²⁴⁰ *Phaedrus* 275d9-e4.

complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a simple one.... either in order to teach or in order to persuade.”²⁴¹ And when a dialectician pursues his art for the right reasons, and practices it with the right goals in mind, in accordance with the right set of values, “so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible,”²⁴² realizing that “only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention,”²⁴³ then he is rightly to be called “wisdom’s lover – a philosopher.”²⁴⁴

Plato implies very heavily, however, that this sort of philosophy, the practice of dialectic as a systematic art towards the end of pursuing wisdom for oneself and fostering its growth in others, is the province of the followers of Zeus. So, Socrates tells Phaedrus, in the course of the palinode, that “we were with Zeus, while others followed other gods,”²⁴⁵ and concludes his description of the philosopher-dialectician with the claim that “such a man, Phaedrus, would be just what you and I both would pray to become.”²⁴⁶ And where he finds someone with a talent for dialectic, Socrates claims, he will “follow ‘straight behind, in his tracks, as if he were a god.’”²⁴⁷ But this, of course, is just the

²⁴¹ *Phaedrus* 277b9-c1.

²⁴² *Phaedrus* 273e6-7.

²⁴³ *Phaedrus* 278a3-6.

²⁴⁴ *Phaedrus* 278d5.

²⁴⁵ *Phaedrus* 250b6-7.

²⁴⁶ *Phaedrus* 278b2-3.

²⁴⁷ *Phaedrus* 266b6-7.

behavior which he has described in a lover who has seen his god's image in the soul of a prospective beloved. And where Socrates has seen an image of his god, he has seen an image of Zeus. When those who follow Zeus, then, 'choose someone to love who is a Zeus himself' insofar as he 'has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others,'²⁴⁸ it seems very plausible that the talent in question is an aptitude specifically for 'philosophy' as dialectic, and the corresponding gift for the 'guidance of others' which comes from its application to teaching other souls through the art of true rhetoric.

The philosophy, then, in which our 'philosophical pair' are engaged, at least in those cases where they are not themselves followers of Zeus, will not be the sort of philosophy as dialectic to which the Zeus-type souls are particularly suited, but rather, some other way of honoring and pursuing wisdom in their lives. And this dual usage of 'philosophy,' sometimes picking out a specific way of honoring and pursuing wisdom through the art of dialectic, and sometimes the much broader practice of honoring and pursuing wisdom in whatever way is suited to the nature of one's own particularly situated type of soul, can account for what might otherwise seem to be oddly conflicting claims within the palinode about what is required for a soul to regrow its wings. Having claimed, for example, that this prize is to be won both by loving philosophically and by practicing 'philosophy without guile,' Plato goes on, within less than a page, to claim that "only a philosopher's mind grows wings."²⁴⁹ If this is not to be a contradiction, then, we

²⁴⁸ See above, p. 23; *Phaedrus* 252e3-5.

²⁴⁹ *Phaedrus* 249c5-6.

must take it that practicing ‘philosophy without guile,’ that is, as we might now presume, employing the arts of dialectic and true rhetoric in the pursuit and teaching of truth, and loving philosophically are both ways of being a philosopher, since the souls of those who do both of these things will regrow their wings. And here, it seems, Plato’s choice of Zeus as the god of the philosopher-dialecticians may be helpful to us in understanding the relationship between these two kinds of philosophy. The role of Zeus, in the palinode’s description of the divine procession, is a universal, systematic task; he is charged with “looking after everything, and putting all things in order,”²⁵⁰ while each of the other gods is occupied only with “seeing to his own work.”²⁵¹ The dialectician then, in attempting to understand the world comprehensively and systematically, is emulating the distinctive way of life of his god, ‘looking after everything, and putting all things in order’ in his own mind, following the unchanging patterns provided by the perfectly real beings outside of heaven in order to do this correctly, just as Zeus himself does in the cosmos as a whole.²⁵² If this comprehensive systemization is the element of dialectic that belongs to the emulation of Zeus, then, what do we have left to say about the method by which the other types of souls pursue philosophy?

If what we have suggested above about the connection between dialectic and recollection is true, then it seems that dialectic is a systematic art of promoting

²⁵⁰ *Phaedrus* 246e5-6.

²⁵¹ *Phaedrus* 247a6.

²⁵² This is my own, somewhat speculative, interpretation of the significance of Zeus’s role as the god of the philosopher-dialecticians in this particular context, given the way in which Plato has chosen to characterize Zeus in the allegorical myth of the palinode. Should this interpretation prove unconvincing, however, the remainder of the argument is intended to stand on its own.

recollection through the use of the resources provided to all of us by our shared human capacity to understand language. It is a systematic art, then, of promoting recollection through the use of language, either in private thought, or in speaking with others. And the way in which such recollection is best promoted for any given soul, it seems, will depend upon the type of soul which it is, both in terms of its unchanging, divine, type, and its degree of accomplishment with respect to understanding and virtue. In their experience of love, however, Plato has argued that our lovers have become 'well equipped' for finding ways of promoting such recollections in themselves in the process of pursuing ever greater emulation of their own particular god. And, since the progress of their love has ensured that they will share a common type of soul, both in terms of divine type, and in terms of their general degree of accomplishment in virtue and in understanding, the ways in which recollection will be best promoted for each of them will be very much the same. In their interactions and conversations with one another over the course of their shared life, then, the philosophical friends will be uniquely positioned, as well as motivated, to create new knowledge for themselves and one another in just that way in which the dialectician is able to do with any given soul whom he may meet,²⁵³ by engaging together in those uses of language which are most suited to promote

²⁵³ Or, perhaps, at least, any sufficiently accomplished soul he may meet. The philosopher-dialectician may not be able to engage in the collaborative creation of new knowledge with souls who are drastically less knowledgeable and skilled than he is, and may be restricted in his conversations with them to guiding them towards the recognition of truths with which he himself is already very familiar, in his role as a true rhetorician. Indeed, one might plausibly read Socrates' engagement with Phaedrus in the dialogue as a whole as an example of just such rhetorical guidance of a less accomplished soul towards greater understanding and pursuit of the truth by a philosopher-dialectician in his role as a practitioner of true rhetoric.

recollection in souls of the type which they share. Where the philosopher-dialectician's ability to engage in such collaborative creation of knowledge through "discourse"²⁵⁴ with any type of soul depends upon his systematic, universal, understanding of the natures, and therefore the needs, of all of the various types of soul, then, the best kind of friend's ability to engage in this same activity of collaboratively creating knowledge depends instead upon his particular, personal, understanding of the natures, and therefore the needs, of his and his friend's own souls.

Conclusion: A Philosophical Life

If this reading of the *Phaedrus* proves a convincing one, then, Plato has provided us, here, not only with an account of the best kinds of friendship which anticipates many of the most compelling features of Aristotle's much more celebrated account, but also with an intriguing picture of the importance of both personal love and personal friendship to the practice of philosophy. The kind of philosophy which we are accustomed to associating with Plato, the rigorous, systematic, dialectical investigation of someone like a Socrates, is on this account a way of loving wisdom to which only a very specific sort of soul is naturally inclined. Any other sort of soul, however, if sufficiently virtuous, is nevertheless equally capable of pursuing and honoring wisdom in that way to which its own type is naturally best suited, through the opportunity afforded by the powerful ability of interpersonal love and friendship to alter the course of our lives. Personal eros and the enduring personal *philia* it creates when correctly pursued can, on this picture, offer any

²⁵⁴ *Phaedrus* 278a7 etc; c.f. 259d6, where "discourse" is picked out as the distinctive domain of the Muses who preside over philosophy.

one of us a way, through a shared lifelong passion for the perfect and true and collaborative pursuit of ever greater virtue and knowledge, of “leading a philosophical life.”²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ *Phaedrus* 259d8.

The Union of Two Persons:
Friendship and Virtue in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*

Introduction: Friendship in The Metaphysics of Morals

Kant, like Plato, and perhaps even more widely, has been much criticized for a seemingly austere and impersonal system of ethics which appears to leave little room for our most important personal relationships as we typically understand them. On many readings of his views it can require work to find a way to cast what we most often take to be central features of these relationships even as morally acceptable, much less as morally valuable in the way that we pre-theoretically take them to be. He is not a philosopher, then, from whom we might be inclined to expect an especially illuminating account of friendship. Also like Plato, however, the topic of friendship in particular, and even, if not nearly to the extent which we see in Plato's case, love, is one which tends to turn up unexpectedly across his works, though often in asides or incidental remarks to which he does not again return. And, two fairly extended discussions of friendship do appear in his ethics, in his *Lectures on Ethics*,²⁵⁶ given toward the beginning of his philosophical career,²⁵⁷ and in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, published towards the end of his career, as the last of his major ethical works. The latter of these is particularly fascinating, both because it seems much more to be intended as an exposition of his own considered views, and because it is appearing not only in the context of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, as the most developed stage of Kant's ethical thinking to which we are extensively privy, but in that of *The Doctrine of Virtue* specifically, in which Kant is

²⁵⁶ Though he did not write and prepare these for publication himself; they were first published in 1924, from notes on his lectures by his students. [See: Immanuel Kant. *Lectures on Ethics*. Trans. Louis Infield. Forward by Lewis White Beck. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1963), p. x.]

²⁵⁷ Or, at least, relatively so, before the publication of the *Critiques* or the *Groundwork*.

engaged in the project of crafting²⁵⁸ a Kantian ethics of virtue, or, dare we say, virtue ethics, and, as such, is in dialogue, in intriguing ways, with this broader project of the work.

Moreover, although this discussion of friendship appears, at first glance, to be both frustratingly brief and opaque, it is positioned within *The Doctrine of Virtue* in a way that suggests that Kant takes it to have a much more general significance for the work as a whole than we might initially infer from its content. It is presented to us, that is, as the conclusion of the entirety of the *Elements of Ethics*, the significantly larger and more complex of the two main sub-divisions of *The Doctrine of Virtue*. It is far from apparent, however, why Kant should take this odd little account of friendship to deserve what seems to be such pride of place. What is it that he takes the broader meaning of this account of friendship to be for his overall account of virtue, such that it would make sense for it to serve as a conclusion to the *Elements of Ethics* in this way? And what might this, in turn, if we could discover it, have to tell us about how best to read his account of virtue overall? This offers us an appealing mystery. The goal of this paper, then, will be a fairly limited one: to offer an attempt to make sense of Kant's account of friendship, as he gives it in these sections, as a kind of virtue friendship, of the sort with which we should now be familiar from Aristotle and Plato, but with some distinctively Kantian features. And, on the basis of this reading, to offer some gestures, though only

²⁵⁸ Or, perhaps, explicating, depending upon how significantly one wishes to take the system he outlines in *The Metaphysics of Morals* to diverge from those presented in his earlier works. This paper attempts to remain agnostic on this larger question of Kant scholarship.

very vague ones, in the direction of how we might begin to see a valuable role for certain types of personal relationships emerge from within Kant's account of virtue.

I. Perfect Friendship & Moral Friendship

What Kant has to say about friendship in these sections, however, is far from clear, beginning with even so simple a question as how many different types of friendship he takes himself to be discussing, and what the features of these types of friendship are. At first glance he appears to be addressing, primarily, two kinds of friendship, to each of which he devotes its own section: "perfect friendship,"²⁵⁹ which, though "practically necessary"²⁶⁰ as an "idea,"²⁶¹ is "unattainable in practice,"²⁶² and "[m]oral friendship"²⁶³ which, by contrast, "is not just an ideal, but, (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection."²⁶⁴ The first of these, 'perfect friendship,' he initially describes, in what would seem to be self-consciously Aristotelian language, as "the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect,"²⁶⁵ "an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being through the morally good will that unites them."²⁶⁶ Though this sort of a friendship can never be fully attained "in its purity

²⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) p. 215, 6:470. Hereafter, '*Metaphysics of Morals*.'

²⁶⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁶¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁶² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁶³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁶⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁶⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁶⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

or completeness,"²⁶⁷ Kant argues, we nevertheless have "a duty of friendship,"²⁶⁸ and presumably, given the context, friendship of this kind, such that "striving for friendship,"²⁶⁹ even as an ideal which we know that we can never fully meet, "is a duty set by reason."²⁷⁰ The second type of friendship, 'moral friendship,' on the other hand, he describes as "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."²⁷¹ Where the first sort of friendship was initially cast in terms of its relationship to duty, this second sort of friendship is first characterized in terms of its advantage to the friends: providing them with a way to meet the innate social "need"²⁷² that every human being feels "to reveal himself to others."²⁷³ While each of us is typically "constrained to lock up in himself a good part of his judgments"²⁷⁴ by considerations of prudence, Kant argues, "cautioned by fear of the misuse others may make of his disclosing his thoughts"²⁷⁵ or even, as it seems that each friend in this sort of 'moral friendship' will, "disclosing his faults,"²⁷⁶ this constant demand that we keep a close watch on how much of our true thoughts and selves we reveal to each other is one which we naturally feel as

²⁶⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:470.

²⁶⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁶⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁷⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

²⁷¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁷² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁷³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁷⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:471.

²⁷⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁷⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

both burdensome and painfully isolating. Within this rare sort of 'moral friendship,' however, Kant claims that each party is relieved of this burden; able to fully entrust the friend with such otherwise potentially hazardous disclosures, he is no longer forced to be "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."²⁷⁷

Already, then, with this fairly cursory description, and without delving further into the many complications raised by the text, we can begin to see some fairly obvious questions arising about these two sorts of friendship, and how they are meant to relate to one another. Most obviously, perhaps, we might ask what is meant to be so 'moral' about the 'moral friendship' that Kant has described for us here. He has seemed to characterize this sort of friendship primarily in terms of its ability to meet some of the friends' innate psychological needs, that is, in terms of what would look to be its satisfaction of certain of their natural interests, rather than in terms of any clear relationship it might have to their moral duty. Instead, he seems to have argued that our 'duty of friendship,' insofar as he clearly takes us to have one, is a duty to strive after the ideal of 'perfect friendship' which he had initially discussed, despite our inability to fully realize this ideal in practice. One might reasonably expect, then, that it would be those friendships which most closely approximated this unattainable ideal, in the relevant respects, which would have the clearest claim to being called 'moral' ones, since it would be in pursuing these sorts of friendships that we would be acting on our moral duty of 'striving for friendship' as

²⁷⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

conceived of in this ideal. Why, then, are we offered this second characterization of a 'moral friendship' so seemingly distinct in its characteristics from the ideal of 'perfect friendship' which Kant has outlined for us in the first section? Are we meant to take it, perhaps, that this second sort of friendship is the closest we can come in practice to the unattainable ideal which 'perfect friendship' offers us, and so, that in 'striving' after friendship of that 'perfect' sort, it is only friendship of this lesser, 'moral,' sort which we can hope, at our most successful, to actually achieve?

At first, this sort of reading might seem promising, given what Kant has said about the possibility of actually finding 'moral friendship' in the world, however rare or difficult such friendships might be, in contrast to the unattainability of 'perfect friendship.' And we might, perhaps, see some further support for this thought in the point that Kant makes of claiming that 'perfect friendship,' to whatever extent it might be attainable, will also, in some important sense, be 'moral' in nature. Such friendship, he argues,

cannot be a union aimed at mutual advantage but must rather be a purely moral one, and the help that each may count on from the other in case of need must not be regarded as the end and determining ground of friendship – for in that case one would lose the other's respect – but only as the outward manifestation of an inner heartfelt benevolence,...²⁷⁸

As we turn our attention to the rest of the section, however, it seems clear that a more subtle understanding of the relationship between these two sorts of friendship will be required, if we are to make good sense of all of Kant's claims. It is far from obvious, to begin with, that whatever he means to be claiming about 'perfect friendship' by calling it a 'purely moral' union is the same sort of point he intends to be making about 'moral

²⁷⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:470-71.

friendship' by giving it this title. Moreover, in light of the rest of the section, it begins to seem increasingly unlikely that this is the case, and at least in part because, rather than in spite, of the passage above.

II. Moral Friendship & Pragmatic Friendship

The first real trouble for this sort of a reading begins to appear when we notice that, although the structure of the two sections does seem to suggest that some sort of contrast is intended between 'moral friendship' and 'perfect friendship,' this is not a contrast that we ever see explicitly drawn. Rather, 'moral friendship' is explicitly contrasted with what seem to be two further types of friendship, neither of which is itself clearly defined. When 'moral friendship' is first introduced, at the beginning of the second section, it is explicitly contrasted not with 'perfect friendship,' but with "friendship based on feeling."²⁷⁹ And this is a sort of friendship with which Kant has just appeared to contrast 'perfect friendship' as well. Towards the end of the first section, he has claimed that

[a]lthough it is sweet to feel in possession of each other in a way that approaches fusion into one person, friendship is something so delicate (*teneritas amicitiae*) that it is never for a moment safe from interruptions if it is allowed to rest on feelings, and if this mutual sympathy and self-surrender are not subjected to principles...²⁸⁰

Thus far, then, the simple sort of reading we suggested above might still seem fairly promising. It appears here that 'perfect friendship' and 'moral friendship' are both being put forward as superior alternatives to some third type of friendship, one ostensibly

²⁷⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁸⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

"common among uncultivated people:"²⁸¹ friendship which is 'based on feeling' or 'allowed to rest on feelings.' Quite plausibly, then, given their commonality in this respect, 'moral friendship' might simply turn out to be that aspect of 'perfect friendship' which is actually achievable in practice. Toward the end of the second section, however, Kant introduces a further contrast, which complicates this picture significantly.

We have said above that one of Kant's central claims about the 'moral friendship' outlined in this section is that, unlike 'perfect friendship,' it is actually achievable 'in its perfection.' In putting forward this crucial claim, however, Kant in fact shifts from speaking simply of 'moral friendship,' as he had in contrasting this sort of friendship with friendship 'based on feeling' at the start of the section, to speaking, more narrowly, of "merely moral friendship."²⁸² It is this '*merely* moral friendship,'²⁸³ then, strictly speaking, which he claims is achievable in its perfection, and which he goes on to contrast with what looks to be a new sort of friendship, first introduced here, what he calls 'pragmatic friendship:'

This (merely moral friendship) is not just an ideal but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection. But that (pragmatic) friendship, which burdens itself with the ends of others, although out of love, can have neither the purity nor the completeness requisite for a precisely determinant maxim; it is an ideal of one's wishes, which knows no bounds in its rational concept but which must always be very limited in experience.²⁸⁴

The initial 'this' in the passage above, however, seems to have no available antecedent except for the type of friendship which has been under immediate discussion in the

²⁸¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

²⁸² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁸³ emphasis mine.

²⁸⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

preceding two paragraphs, that is, 'moral friendship' more generally. What, then, are we to make of the additional 'merely,' here? The best light to be shed on this question would seem to come from examining the contrast in the service of which we see this qualification of 'moral friendship,' as 'merely,' being introduced, that with 'pragmatic friendship,' a friendship 'which burdens itself with the ends of others, although out of love.'

We may notice that, as a description of friendship, the 'moral friendship' Kant has just outlined above seems strangely lacking in many of the features that we typically associate with any sort of friendship we think worthy of the name. Most glaringly, perhaps, this description omits any mention of affection between the two parties, or apparent concern for each other's well-being, beyond the fairly minimal concern required by the circumspection called for to make each party deserving of the other's confidence. While "the necessary combination of qualities"²⁸⁵ for such 'moral friends' does include certain affinities, there is no intimation of the sort of 'mutual sympathy' involved in 'perfect friendship' or in 'friendship based on feeling,' or even of some more limited, or perhaps less emotional, investment in one party, or that party's well-being, by the other, beyond an investment in the benefit each party gains in relief from isolation and enjoyment of the frank conversation that the other provides to them. Each party to such a friendship, Kant claims, must find in the other "someone intelligent – someone who,

²⁸⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

moreover, shares his general outlook on things..."²⁸⁶ who does not share the "base cast of mind in most human beings to use... [one's confidences] to one's disadvantage"²⁸⁷ and who is not "indiscrete or incapable of judging and distinguishing what may or may not be repeated."²⁸⁸ The friend must, instead, be willing to be "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."²⁸⁹ That is, it seems, each party must find in the friend those qualities which make them instrumentally suitable to provide him with the sort of trusted confidant and intellectually satisfying opportunity "to discuss with someone what he thinks about his associates, the government, religion, and so forth..."²⁹⁰ which he craves. Beyond what is required for the success of this exchange, however, we see no indication of investment by either of the parties in the happiness or well-being of the other. And this passage, in introducing the contrast with 'pragmatic friendship,' serves to highlight this absence.

That this is what the passage is doing, however, may be less than immediately obvious, since it is not the potentially motivating 'love' itself which is given as the defining feature of this contrasting kind of friendship, but rather, the adoption of the other's 'ends,' whether out of 'love' or otherwise. In the context of Kant's lengthy discussion of love and benevolence in the preceding chapters, however, that the intended

²⁸⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁸⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁸⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁸⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

²⁹⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

contrast here is with a sort of friendship in which each friend takes an interest in the happiness or well-being of the other seems clear. In these preceding chapters Kant has argued, repeatedly, that to wish another person well, to be benevolent towards them, or to take their happiness as one's own end, in at least the primary and most morally significant sense, can only be, if it is to be consistent with respect for them, to take that other person's ends, insofar as these are morally permissible (and not, perhaps, in one's own view, irrelevant or in some way harmful to their happiness) as one's own:

When it comes to my promoting happiness as an end that is also a duty, this must... be the happiness of *other* human beings, *whose* (permitted) *end I thus make my own end as well*. It is for them to decide what they count as belonging to their happiness; but it is open to me to refuse them many things which *they* think will make them happy but that I do not, as long as they have no right to demand them from me as what is theirs.²⁹¹

He later goes on to say that "[t]he duty of love for one's neighbor can, accordingly, also be expressed as the duty to make others' *ends* my own (provided only that these are not immoral),"²⁹² presumably since, as he has said elsewhere, this 'duty of love' is, at least in the first instance, a duty of "active, practical benevolence (beneficence), making the well-being and happiness of others my *end*."²⁹³ Elaborating on the duty of beneficence,²⁹⁴ moreover, Kant emphasizes that it can be *only* such promotion of another's ends²⁹⁵ that

²⁹¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:388.

²⁹² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 199, 6:449.

²⁹³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 201, 6:452.

²⁹⁴ As we will see, beneficence, benevolence, and love, of the various sorts which Kant considers, have complicated, and often less than entirely clear, relationships in The Doctrine of Virtue. Although the subtleties of these relationships are important, it seems reasonable to set many of these questions aside for present purposes.

²⁹⁵ Or, at least, perhaps, more weakly, of ends consistent or consonant enough with those which we know the other to have that we would be justified in taking these ends to be ones which they *would* adopt, were they confronted with the relevant circumstances and information.

counts as a service to their happiness, and *not* the imposition of my own understanding of happiness upon them, although, as he has said above, such a difference in our understandings of happiness may license me to deny them certain things:

I cannot do good to anyone in accordance with *my* concepts of happiness (except to young children and the insane), thinking to benefit him by forcing a gift upon him; rather, I can benefit him only in accordance with *his* concepts of happiness.²⁹⁶

In light of all this, then, it seems reasonably clear that we should take a sort of friendship which 'burdens itself with the ends of others' to be one in which the friends have taken up concern for and promotion of one another's happiness or well-being as a part of their friendship, that is, a sort of friendship in which each of the friends is broadly benevolent, and beneficent, toward the other.

The contrast Kant is drawing here, then, between 'pragmatic friendship' and 'merely moral friendship,' is a contrast between a type of friendship in which each of the friends is directly invested in the well-being or happiness of the other, and, as it clearly seems that we should infer, a type of friendship in which this is not the case. Since this 'pragmatic friendship' has been so thinly characterized, moreover, described for us in only the one sentence quoted above, after which Kant immediately moves on to a new, though related, topic, there can be little doubt that it is this aspect of 'pragmatic friendship' on which the contrast is meant to hang. What, then, does this tell us about our question above, of why Kant chooses to shift here to speaking of 'merely moral friendship,' rather than simply 'moral friendship' in general, as he had described it for us in the immediately

²⁹⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 203, 6:454.

preceding passages? As we have noted above, the description Kant has given us of 'moral friendship' in general is one in which this aspect of investment by the friends in one another's happiness had already seemed to be conspicuously absent, and the explicit contrast here would certainly appear to draw attention to this absence. Perhaps, then, the additional 'merely' in this passage is simply meant to draw attention to the relative deficiencies of this sort of a friendship, that is, of 'moral friendship' in general, in contrast to a 'pragmatic friendship' which, though unattainable 'in its perfection,' is seen to be superior to 'moral friendship' insofar as it possesses this element of investment by each of the friends in the other's well-being or happiness.

III. Pragmatic Friendship & Perfect Friendship

Indeed, we may notice that this 'pragmatic friendship,' though scantily described, seems to share both of its central features with the 'perfect friendship' which Kant has outlined in the preceding section. Might it be that he is *not*, in fact, introducing a new sort of friendship here at all, but, rather, referring back to the 'perfect friendship' to which he has already attributed these features? Might he, that is, intend the contrast he is drawing here simply to be read as the expected one between 'perfect friendship' and 'moral friendship' in general? If this were his intention then the phrasing of this contrast in terms of 'pragmatic friendship,' rather than 'perfect friendship,' would seem to be frustratingly unclear, but that would hardly be so far out of character for Kant. So, perhaps such a reading is not so implausible. It would make good sense, moreover, of his use of the additional 'merely' here, as a simple indication of the relative deficiencies of

such 'moral friendship,' when compared to the 'perfect friendship' which he clearly takes to be superior on several fronts. We have seen extensively, after all, that 'perfect friendship' possesses those qualities which would make a friendship count as a 'pragmatic' one by these standards. And we have seen this not only in Kant's claims about the mutual love between such 'perfect' friends, which we might attempt to interpret in terms of some other of the types of 'love' which he discusses in *The Doctrine of Virtue*, or about their 'participating and sharing sympathetically in one another's happiness,' which we might, perhaps, try to explain away as indicating some less 'practical,' or more sentimental, investment in one another's happiness or well-being than that which 'pragmatic friendship' requires, but in explicit mentions of these friends' standing commitments to serving one another's "best interests,"²⁹⁷ and looking after one another's "needs."²⁹⁸

In discussing the social and psychological barriers that stand in the way of our 'striving' after such 'perfect friendship,' for instance, even to the extent that it may be, in principle, (imperfectly) achievable in our experience, that is, what he calls "the difficulties in perfect friendship,"²⁹⁹ Kant points out that what best serves the friend's well-being or happiness, even, it seems, by the friend's own lights, may sometimes be at

²⁹⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:470.

²⁹⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:470.

²⁹⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:470.

That this is the way we should read Kant's topic in these passages on 'the difficulties in perfect friendship' is far from obvious, and will require more argument to make entirely convincing. Hopefully, however, it can be granted here as plausible, for present purposes.

odds with his pride, or with his perception that we duly respect him, and this tension can often lead to discord between us:

From a moral point of view it is, of course, a duty for one of the friends to point out the other's faults to him; this is in the other's best interests and is therefore a duty of love. But the latter sees in this a lack of the respect he expected from his friend and thinks that he has either already lost or is in constant danger of losing something of his friend's respect...³⁰⁰

It is a duty, then, this seems to imply, for each of the friends to strive to serve 'the other's best interests,' even when doing so may put a strain on the friendship itself. And this is not, it seems from the proceeding chapters, a duty which we have with respect to our fellow human beings in general, or, at least, if we do, not with the sort of stringency we see suggested here. Furthermore, each friend both expects that the other would come to his aid should he ever find himself in need, and worries that this may be too much to ask of his friend, or even an expectation which he might himself have difficulty living up to, should the occasion arise:

How one wishes for a friend in need (one who is, of course, an active friend, ready to help at his own expense)! But still it is also a heavy burden to feel chained to another's fate and encumbered with his needs.³⁰¹

This, Kant argues, is, at least in part, why, as we have seen him claim above, such a friendship 'cannot be a union aimed at mutual advantage.' Rather, as he goes on to say here, each friend understands that the other's 'benevolence' "should not be put to the test since this is always dangerous."³⁰² Instead of being motivated in their forming and

³⁰⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:470.

³⁰¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:470.

³⁰² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

sustaining of such friendships by the help which they can, quite legitimately, expect from one another, then,

each is generously concerned with sparing the other his burden and bearing it all by himself, even concealing it altogether from his friend, while yet he can always flatter himself that in case of need he could confidently count on the other's help.³⁰³

It seems clear, then, that the 'burden' in question here is not just one of wishes or goodwill, but of actual, practical, aid, and so, given what we have seen above about the sort of aid which can be compatible with respect for the person to whom it is offered, of taking one another's ends as their own. Such a 'perfect' friendship, then, like a 'pragmatic friendship,' will be one 'which burden's itself with the ends of others.' As we have already seen, moreover, the second feature by which Kant characterizes this 'pragmatic friendship,' that of being 'an ideal of one's wishes, which knows no bounds in its rational concept but which must always be very limited in experience' seems also clearly to be one which 'perfect friendship' shares.³⁰⁴

A 'perfect friendship,' then, it seems, will always be a 'pragmatic friendship,' by Kant's (admittedly rather limited) characterization of friendships of this latter kind. But, should we also take it that any 'pragmatic friendship,' to the extent that these occur in experience, will also, to that same extent, be a case of 'perfect friendship,' such that we can treat Kant's talk of these two types of friendship as largely interchangeable?

³⁰³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

³⁰⁴ Although, one might question the applicability of the clause which seems to be offered as an elaboration of pragmatic friendship's status in this respect to 'perfect friendship': that it 'can have neither the purity nor the completeness requisite for a precisely determinant maxim.' As our argument progresses, however, it should become increasingly plausible that this, too, is a feature which 'perfect' and 'pragmatic' friendship share, to the extent that they are both to be understood as strivings after unattainable ideals.

Although this would simplify things considerably, upon further examination it would seem to be unlikely. We can begin to see why when we turn our attention to Kant's subsequent discussion, immediately following this contrast between 'merely moral' and 'pragmatic' friendship, of what he takes the difference to be between "a *friend* of human beings"³⁰⁵ and a "*philanthropist*."³⁰⁶ Here he argues that

the expression "a *friend* of human beings" is somewhat narrower in its meaning than "one who merely loves human beings" (a *philanthropist*). For the former includes, as well, thought and consideration for the *equality* among them.... – For, the relation of a protector, as a benefactor, to the one he protects, who owes him gratitude, is indeed a relation of mutual love, but not of friendship, since the respect owed by each is not equal.³⁰⁷

Notice, first, then, that 'the respect owed,' here, cannot be the same sort of negative respect which we owe to all human beings simply in virtue of their personhood, since this will always be owed equally to all, by definition. Rather, it must be some kind of respect, whatever this may be, which it is not only *permissible* that we afford to some in greater measure than to others, but in fact, in at least some cases, it seems, obligatory.³⁰⁸ And some type of respect like this, at least to the extent of being permissibly afforded to some in greater measure than to others, and perhaps even to the extent of being differentially owed in this way, is a type of respect which is needed in Kant's account of friendship, if

³⁰⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

³⁰⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:473.

³⁰⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472-3.

³⁰⁸ That is, it seems, at least, that we are in some cases obligated to afford a greater measure of such respect to some than we are obligated to afford to others, not, necessarily, that we are obligated to afford the parties different measures of such respect. It may well be, and it seems, at least in the context of this discussion, that it likely is, entirely *permissible* to respect such parties equally, although this respect is only *owed* to some, and not to others.

we are to make good sense of his characterization of 'perfect friendship' as a 'union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect.'

In striving after such 'perfect friendship,' Kant has argued, achieving and maintaining the required equality of respect between the friends, and the appropriate balance within each friend of this respect with the requisite love, is just as difficult and crucial a task as achieving and maintaining an equality between them in love:

For in his relations with his neighbor how can a human being ascertain whether one of the elements requisite to this duty [of friendship] (e.g., benevolence toward each other) is *equal* in the disposition of each of the friends? Or, even more difficult, how can he tell what relation there is in the same person between the feeling from one duty and that from the other (the feeling from benevolence and that from respect)? And how can he be sure that if the *love* of one is stronger, he may not, just because of this, forfeit something of the other's respect, so that it will be difficult for both to bring love and respect subjectively into that equal balance required for friendship?³⁰⁹

If the respect in question here were simply that negative respect which is equally owed to all persons in virtue of their humanity, however, it could simply be presumed that it would be equal between the two parties, to the extent that neither friend was violating his general duties to the other as a human being. Furthermore, it would make little sense to suggest, as this passage, though admittedly itself quite confusing, seems to do, that the respect which each friend had for the other would need to be modulated in proportion to his love, such that the 'relation... in the same person between the feeling from one duty and that from the other' was kept in an appropriate balance, since respect of this negative sort, to the extent that it is present, would not seem to be the sort of thing which comes in degrees. Instead, as Kant has argued in the preceding chapters, such negative respect would seem to represent a sort of minimal threshold, beneath which one may not

³⁰⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469-6:470.

permissibly fall, and "failure to fulfill the duty arising from the *respect* owed to every human being as such is a *vice*."³¹⁰

The difference which would seem to be suggested here, then, between the '*friend* of human beings' and the '*philanthropist*,' if we assume, as it seems reasonable to do, that both such individuals maintain that negative respect owed to all human beings as such for those to whom they offer their help, such that neither one acts viciously, is the difference between an individual who is concerned to maintain an *equality* in respect between himself and those he benefits, and one who has no such concern for the asymmetry in respect between himself and those he helps which might be generated by this further sort of respect they come to owe him as their benefactor. The '*philanthropist*,' as Kant says, is one who 'merely loves human beings,' that is, it seems, in this context, who both offers them help of the morally permissible kind we have seen above, when feasible, that is, to at least some extent, takes their ends as his own, and who, as we see Kant go on to say here, "takes an affective interest in the well-being of all human beings (rejoices with them) and will never disturb it without heartfelt regret."³¹¹ The '*friend* of human beings,' on the other hand, in *addition* to this 'love,' is distinguished by his further concern to maintain an equality in respect between himself and those whom he so loves.

If we return to our question about the relationship between 'pragmatic friendship' and 'perfect friendship,' then, keeping this distinction in mind, it seems that we could

³¹⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 211, 6:464.

³¹¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 217, 6:472.

reasonably infer, given the way in which 'pragmatic friendship' has been similarly described in terms of what we have seen to be Kant's understanding of 'practical love,' that a parallel relationship is at work here. What is required for 'pragmatic friendship,' it seems, is only that the friends 'love' each other, in the appropriate sense, not that they share the further 'equal mutual... respect' which is called for by 'perfect friendship.' Just as every 'friend of human beings' will be a 'philanthropist,' then, but not every 'philanthropist' will be a 'friend of human beings,' since both of these call for the same sort of 'love,' but only the later requires this further concern for equality of respect, it seems that every 'perfect friendship' will be a 'pragmatic' one, but that not every 'pragmatic friendship' will in turn be a 'perfect' one, and for similar reasons.

IV. 'Merely' Moral Friendship

If 'pragmatic friendship' is not, then, as had perhaps seemed initially plausible, simply meant to be equivalent to 'perfect friendship,' but is intended, as we have argued, to be a distinct, though compatible, type of friendship in its own right, can we still plausibly explain the additional 'merely' with which Kant qualifies 'moral friendship' in contrasting it with 'pragmatic friendship' as a straightforward indication of its relative deficiency or inferiority as a type of friendship in the context of this contrast? It would seem, in light of what we have said above, that we cannot. If 'pragmatic friendship' is, as we have just argued, simply that type of friendship in which the friends show direct mutual concern for one another's happiness or well-being, adopting each other's ends as their own, such that any friendship displaying this feature will, whatever its other features

may be, count, to that extent, as a 'pragmatic friendship,' though it may be a friendship of another type as well, then it seems highly implausible that Kant should mean to say here that 'pragmatic' friendship will, in general, and regardless of what other features it may have, be superior, on the whole, to 'moral friendship.' Though a 'pragmatic friendship' may be superior to a 'moral friendship' *to the extent that* it possesses this feature of investment by the parties in each other's well-being, that is, we have good reason to think that a 'moral friendship' may often, at least by Kant's standards, be a superior one on the whole.

This seems clear, for example, from the fact that it appears quite plausible from Kant's description of those friendships which are 'allowed to rest on feelings' that many friendships of this sort are also likely to count as 'pragmatic friendships' on his understanding. He has described these friendships which 'rest on feelings,' after all, as ones in which the friends are united by the same sort of 'mutual sympathy and self-surrender' which we see in the case of the 'perfect' friends, and come, as the 'perfect' friends also presumably do, to 'feel in possession of each other in a way that approaches fusion into one person.' In contrast to a 'perfect friendship,' however, the friends in such a friendship fail to govern their relationship with the appropriate 'principles,' "limiting mutual love by requirements of respect."³¹² Although the 'requirements of respect' here could, perhaps, be simply those of that negative respect which is owed to all human beings in virtue of their personhood, so that the failings of the friends in this sort of a

³¹² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 216, 6:471.

relationship would amount to transgressions of their general duty, in contrast to what we take to be the case in 'pragmatic friendship,' it seems unlikely that such friendships are meant, at least typically, to be so flawed as to be actually immoral in this way. More likely, given the context of this discussion as a contrast to 'perfect friendship,' in which the relevant 'principles' regarding the balance between love and respect are presumably concerned with that difficult balance between love and the additional sort of respect called for between friends which we have seen Kant discuss above, such friendships are not meant to be ones in which the parties fail to respect one another simply as human beings, but in which they fail to recognize and strive after this further, much more complicated, balance. And, if this is the case, then these friendships will be ones, it seems, in which the relevant sort of 'love' is present, but the relevant sort of 'respect,' beyond that negative respect which is required for all human beings simply as persons, is not. That is, they will, at least in some or many cases, be 'pragmatic' friendships. Kant has made it fairly clear, however, that he thinks very little of these sorts of friendships, not only in comparison to 'perfect friendship,' but, it seems reasonable to think, in comparison to the 'moral friendship' with which he also explicitly contrasts them. If Kant takes 'moral friendship' to be broadly superior to friendship 'based on feeling,' however, as it seems we have good reason to take him to do, and many such friendships 'based on feeling' will themselves, in turn, be 'pragmatic' friendships by his standards, then it hardly seems likely that he takes 'pragmatic friendship' in general to be broadly superior to 'moral friendship' in the way that he would need to do for this to plausibly explain the

additional 'merely' he deploys in the contrast between 'pragmatic' and 'merely moral' friendship which we have been trying to understand.

Fortunately, however, our discussion above would seem to suggest another possibility for what the additional 'merely' might be doing in this context: that is, it might be signaling that Kant is here contrasting 'pragmatic friendship' not with 'moral friendship' in general, but with 'moral friendship' considered *merely as such*, apart from any further features it might have outside of its definitional ones, or other sorts of friendship with which it might well be compatible and could be found combined. This would be consistent with his use of such language elsewhere, moreover, as, for example, when we see him, in the subsequent discussion, describe the 'philanthropist' as one who 'merely loves human beings,'³¹³ in contrast to the 'friend of human beings' who *both* 'loves human beings' in this way *and* concerns himself, further, with maintaining an equality in respect with them. Or, as when, in perhaps an even clearer example, much earlier in the text, he divides the duties of virtue to oneself into those which one owes to oneself "as an Animal Being,"³¹⁴ that is, as he has previously explained, insofar as one "views himself both as an **animal** (natural) and a moral being"³¹⁵ and those which one owes to oneself "merely as a moral being,"³¹⁶ that is, as he has also said, "as a moral being *only* (without taking his animality into consideration)."³¹⁷ And if this is the purpose the additional

³¹³ emphasis mine.

³¹⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 176, 6:421.

³¹⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 175, 6:420.

³¹⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 182, 6:429.

³¹⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 175, 6:420.

'merely' is serving here, then this would seem to change the way we would most naturally read the relationship being suggested between 'pragmatic friendship' and 'moral friendship' in general. If the contrast being drawn here is not between 'pragmatic friendship' and 'moral friendship' in general, that is, but specifically between 'pragmatic friendship' and 'moral friendship' *considered merely as such*, and if, furthermore, Kant feels the need to specify (however opaquely) that this is the case, as he did not in the instance of his earlier contrast between 'moral friendship' and 'friendship based on feeling,' then this would seem to suggest that the contrast here is not meant, as it might have initially appeared, to present these two types of friendship as mutually exclusive. The implication, in this case, would not be, as it might otherwise have appeared, that 'moral friendship' is in any way *incompatible* with the sort of mutual concern and investment in one another's well-being or happiness which we found so strangely lacking in Kant's initial account of friendship of this type. Rather, the passage would be emphasizing that these otherwise expected features, presented here as the defining marks of 'pragmatic friendship' instead, are no required part of 'moral friendship,' as such. Where 'moral' friends might well, perhaps, come to care for one another in this way, that is, and a given 'moral friendship' might well be, or come to be, a 'pragmatic friendship' as well, its doing so would play no part in its being a 'moral friendship,' and its failure to do so would in no way be a failing as a friendship of this sort.

What Kant has seemed to claim here, then, if we read the contrast in this, seemingly quite plausible, way, is that a friendship of the broadly transactional sort which

we have seen depicted in his 'moral friendship,' in which each of the parties trusts and respects the other, takes care and can be relied upon not to compromise the confidences of the other, and provides the other with the satisfaction of his natural need for honest and uninhibited social intercourse and intellectual exchange, is, insofar as this is the extent of the relationship, achievable 'in its perfection.' But, should the friends, in addition to this, take a direct interest in the happiness or well-being of the other, adopting each other's ends as their own and positively promoting those ends to the extent that they are able, then the relationship between them will have become something other than just a 'moral friendship' of this sort, and, though it may perhaps remain a 'perfect' instance of 'moral friendship' considered merely as such, insofar as this additional feature is present it will have become, overall, a type of friendship which is no longer, in practice, perfectible.

V. The Other's Faults

If this is the case, however, then, given what we have said above about the relationship between 'pragmatic' and 'perfect friendship,' it would seem to suggest a further question about how such 'moral friendship' might relate to 'perfect friendship,' as well, and one which might help to bring us closer to an answer about why Kant chooses to call this strangely restricted seeming type of friendship 'moral.' That is, if 'pragmatic friendship' is, as we have argued, a necessary, though not a sufficient, component of Kant's 'perfect friendship,' and if 'moral friendship,' like 'pragmatic friendship,' may also be compatible with other sorts of friendship in the way that we have suggested above, might it be plausible that such 'moral friendship' is also a necessary, though not a

sufficient, component of 'perfect friendship,' such that the 'perfect friendship' which Kant has described would be one in which both of these two types of friendship, 'pragmatic' and 'moral,' were to be found together? When read in light of Kant's arguments elsewhere in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, it would seem that some of the passages we have already examined above begin to offer us good reasons for reading the relationship between 'perfect friendship' and 'moral friendship' in just such a way.

In particular, Kant's argument that each of the perfect friends has a duty 'to point out the other's faults to him,' since 'this is in the other's best interests and is therefore a duty of love,' when read in conjunction with what he has said elsewhere, seems to drive us towards this sort of a reading. As we have argued above, it seems clear that this duty of the 'perfect' friends to 'point out' each other's faults to them is one which is called for by the 'pragmatic' aspect of their 'perfect friendship,' that is, by their obligation, within such a friendship, to care for and promote one another's happiness or well-being. This much seems clear from the reason Kant gives for why each friend must do this, that is, that it 'is in the other's best interests and is therefore a duty of love' given that, as we have also said, this 'duty of love' is not one which they owe in the same way to those with whom they do not share such friendship. But, there is something here that should make us pause, aside from the fact that Kant claims, rather cryptically, that this is a duty that the friends owe to each other, specifically, 'from a moral point of view.' And this, it seems, is the question of exactly *how* this sort of pointing out of the friend's 'faults' to him is meant to so obviously *be* in his 'best interests,' especially in light of the negative

response to such criticisms which Kant goes on to describe the friend as likely to have, and the very real threat that he seems to take this sort of a response to pose to the overall well-being and continuation of their friendship. It seems plausible, of course, that the 'faults' in question might at times be of the sort which would in some way proximally undermine the friend's ability to effectively achieve his ends. And, if this were the case, then it would be plausible to think that each friend's concern for the other's happiness, that is, on Kant's account, for his ends, insofar as this concern becomes, in the context of their friendship, not only an interest, but also a duty, might require him to try to assist his friend in overcoming these faults, for the sake of the ends in question. It seems plausible, then, that this sort of pointing out of the friend's faults to him could be called for in some cases simply by the straightforwardly 'pragmatic' aspect of the friends' 'perfect friendship.' However, it seems far from clear that this would always, or even often, be the case.

Instead, it seems that in at least many cases the friend's faults would not be of the sort which would proximally interfere with his pursuit or achievement of his ends in this way. And, in these cases, it is far from obvious, given Kant's characterization of the 'pragmatic' friends' concern for one another's happiness or well-being in terms of their taking up of one another's ends as their own, why we should take this sort of pointing out of the friend's faults to him to be in the service of his overall 'best interests' or 'happiness,' conceived of in the way in which these would need to be in order for his doing so to qualify as an act, much less as a duty, 'of love.' Insofar as we take the well-being and

continuation of the friendship between the two, to which Kant seems to take the conflict and misunderstanding which can follow upon such a highlighting of the friend's faults to pose a potentially serious threat, moreover, to be among the friend's own ends, as it seems that we should, it would appear that such a pointing out of the friend's faults to him might not only fail to serve, but actually disserve, his happiness, so conceived, in such cases. How, then, should we explain Kant's apparent full confidence that such an action by the friend not only serves the other's 'best interests,' in some sense or another, despite the difficulties for their friendship it can cause, but, evidently, their happiness or well-being specifically, in the sense in which it would need to do so in order to qualify as a potential 'duty of love,' that is, in the sense in which this requires a contribution to the pursuit or achievement of the friend's own ends?

It seems, initially, as though the answer to the first part of this question might in fact be something very like what one would expect it to be at first blush, that is, that it is in the friend's best interest to assist him in correcting his faults simply insofar as this helps him to have fewer and less serious faults over time, to become, to that extent, a less faulty, and so a better, person. It seems quite plausible that Kant, in making his claim here, could be taking this simple sort of explanation to be a fairly obvious one, and surely, we might be inclined to think, this sort of an improvement in one's character or behavioral patterns over time could be rightly seen to be in one's best interests,³¹⁸

³¹⁸ Assuming, of course, as would seem to be the intended case here, that this was a genuine and chosen self-improvement, the means of which were not at odds with one's autonomy or dignity. More on this point later on.

regardless of whether or not one reaped any further, more straightforwardly 'pragmatic,' benefits from it. But, if we try to answer the first part of our question in this, seemingly quite obvious, way, it looks as though we may put ourselves into a difficult position with respect to the second part of our question, that is, with respect to the question of how such an action is not only in the friend's best interests, but, more specifically, in the service of his happiness, in the way in which this must be conceived in order for the action to be capable of being a duty of love. And this is because, in the preceding sections of *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant has appeared not only to explicitly exclude any positive duty to the improvement of another's character, that is, to what he calls their 'perfection,' from inclusion among one's possible duties and so, presumably, one's duties of love, but also to exclude this 'perfection' itself from the relevant conception of 'happiness.'

VI. Another's Perfection

"[I]t is a contradiction," he claims, in the Introduction to the *Doctrine of Virtue*, "for me to make another's *perfection* my end and consider myself under obligation to promote this."³¹⁹

For the *perfection* of another human being, as a person, consists just in this: that he *himself* is able to set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty; and it is self-contradictory to require that I do (make it my duty to do) something that only the other himself can do.³²⁰

³¹⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:386.

³²⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:386.

Moreover, he appears to to argue in a subsequent section that, whatever sort of benefit one might consider one's moral well-being to be to one, it would be a mistake to consider this a part of one's happiness:

Some people, however, make a distinction between moral happiness (which consists in satisfaction with one's person and one's own moral conduct, and so with what one *does*) and natural happiness (which consists in satisfaction with what nature bestows, and so with what one *enjoys* as a gift from without). Although I refrain here from censuring a misuse of the word happiness (that already involves a contradiction), it must be noted that the former kind of feeling belongs only under the preceding heading, namely perfection.³²¹

It would seem, on the surface, here, then, that Kant is making the claim that the sort of 'satisfaction with one's person and one's own moral conduct' which such people argue constitutes a kind of 'happiness,' distinct from that 'natural happiness' which has non-moral sources, is in fact not a type of happiness at all, but rather a component of, or identical with, the previously discussed moral 'perfection.' And, if this were the case, then, insofar as a 'duty of love' is, as Kant has defined it, a duty which follows from our duty to make the happiness of others, specifically, our end, it would seem that we could not call a duty to promote the moral well-being of others, that is, their moral perfection, a duty of love, however much in their 'interests' this might be, even if we were somehow to overcome his apparent denial, in the first passage above, of the possibility of our having such a duty.

But, perhaps, one might think, we can see a way out of this first part of our dilemma, in that Kant might appear to deploy, in this passage, a sense of 'happiness' which is clearly distinct from the one he deploys in defining our duties of love as duties

³²¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:387-8.

to promote the 'happiness' of others. Elsewhere, as we have seen extensively above, he appears to take the 'happiness' of others, in the sense in which this is definitional of our duties of love, to be broadly equivalent to the satisfaction of their chosen ends, rather than to the sort of *feeling* of satisfaction with their actions or conditions which he seems to be discussing here. Perhaps, we might think, he is not speaking in his own person when he calls either of these 'feelings' of satisfaction a kind of 'happiness,' but merely providing us with the mistaken definitions deployed by 'some people.' And, if this is the case, then perhaps it is not so obvious that one's moral perfection could not be included in one's happiness, as he conceives it. Unfortunately for such a response, however, Kant has just offered what appears to be a definition of happiness much along these same lines as a part of his own argument against the claim that one might have a duty to promote one's own happiness, in addition to the happiness of others:

Since it is unavoidable in human nature to wish for and seek happiness, that is, satisfaction with one's state, so long as one is assured of its lasting, this is not an end that is also a duty.³²²

It would seem, then, at least on the surface, that this possible equivocation is unlikely to offer us much help. To the extent that it may constitute an equivocation within Kant's overall account of happiness, however, and so within his account of the duties of virtue as a whole, it may well pose a problem which requires more attention in its own right.³²³

For our present purposes, however, it may be more useful to turn to the reasoning Kant offers us for *why* such a 'feeling' of satisfaction with one's conduct and person

³²² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:387.

³²³ Attention which, regretfully, I cannot give it here, although I hope to do so in a future paper.

belongs under the 'heading' of 'perfection,' rather than that of happiness. And the reasoning he offers us here is both strangely brief and decidedly odd:

For, someone who is said to feel happy in the mere consciousness of his rectitude already possesses the perfection which was explained there as that end which is also a duty.³²⁴

This is a puzzling argument for the claim above not just because it is the only support he explicitly offers us for what would seem to be a significant point, but because it would seem to imply that the 'perfection' in question is a prerequisite for this sort of feeling of 'happiness,' rather than either subsuming or being identical with it in the way that the most obvious readings of the claim itself would suggest. Moreover, after dismissing this proposed division of 'happiness' into the 'natural' and the 'moral' in such seemingly uncompromising terms, Kant appears to go on to deploy the distinction himself, in his very next argument. The happiness only of others, he here claims again, can be seen as an end which is also a duty, an end which we must pursue by making the permitted ends of others, or at least some among these, our own ends as well. But, he maintains,

time and again an alleged *obligation* to attend to my *own* (natural) happiness is set up in competition with this end, and my natural and merely subjective end is thus made a duty (an objective end). Since this is often used as a specious objection to the division of duties made above (in IV^[325]), it needs to be set right.³²⁶

He goes on to argue that, although "[a] diversity, pain, and want are great temptations to violate one's duty,"³²⁷ and it might therefore seem as though one has a duty to make one's

³²⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:388.

³²⁵ That is, into those of '*one's own perfection*' and '*the happiness of others*,' at *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:385-6.

³²⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151-2, 6:388.

³²⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 152, 6:388.

own "prosperity, strength, health, and well-being in general, which check the influence of these"³²⁸ one's ends, "so that one has a duty to promote *one's own* happiness and not just the happiness of others,"³²⁹ this is a merely apparent difficulty for his claim that one has no such duty. And this is because, he argues, although there may be cases where one *does* have a duty to promote these various aspects of one's own well-being, in such cases

the end is not the subject's happiness but his morality, and happiness is merely a means for removing obstacles to his morality – a *permitted* means, since no one else has a right to require of me that I sacrifice my ends if these are not immoral.³³⁰

Such a promotion of one's own happiness may indeed, under some circumstances, then, be a duty. But, such duties do not imply that we have a duty to make our own happiness our end. Rather, for example,

To seek prosperity for its own sake is not directly a duty, but indirectly it can well be a duty, that of warding off poverty insofar as this is a great temptation to vice. But then it is not my happiness but the preservation of my moral integrity that is my end and also my duty.³³¹

Although this section is titled "*The Happiness of Others*,"³³² then, his intention here seems to be much less to argue that it is in fact our duty to have this as our end (an argument which he gives several sections later)³³³ than it is to respond to what he sees as the likely objections to his claim that it is *only* this type of happiness, and not our own, which we have a duty to take as our end. That is, to defend his previous claim, in section IV, that "[p]erfection and happiness cannot be interchanged here, so that *one's own*

³²⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 152, 6:388.

³²⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 152, 6:388.

³³⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 152, 6:388.

³³¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 152, 6:388.

³³² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:387.

³³³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 155-156, 6:393-4.

happiness and the perfection of others would be in themselves duties of the same person,"³³⁴ but that only "*one's own perfection and the happiness of others*"³³⁵ can be counted among those ends which it is a duty for all human beings to have.

And, if this is his primary concern in the section overall, then this may help us to begin to understand his claim that so-called 'moral happiness' 'belongs only under the preceding heading, namely perfection' in a way that both makes sense of the odd way in which he argues for this claim, and starts to relieve us of some of our broader difficulties. If we approach this section as a whole as one in which his primary goal is to offer an argument against others' claims that there is such a duty to make one's own happiness one's end, that is, it becomes plausible that we should read the 'misuse of the word happiness' against which he takes himself to be arguing in the passage above not simply as the application of the word 'happiness' to so-called 'moral happiness,' or the drawing of a distinction between this and 'natural happiness,' but, rather, the deployment of this proposed distinction as an argument against his case that there is no such duty to make our own happiness our end.

VII. Our Own Happiness

After beginning the section with the argument against such a duty which we have just seen above, that our own happiness 'is not an end which is also a duty' because 'it is unavoidable for human nature to wish for and seek happiness,' Kant turns immediately

³³⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:387.

³³⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:385.

from this to his discussion of the supposed distinction between 'moral' and 'natural' happiness without preamble, offering us only a mysterious 'however' to signal how he takes the two topics to be related. 'Some people, however' make such a distinction, he says, and this 'however' can only be meant with respect to the immediately preceding passage, in which he has offered us this argument against a duty to our own happiness. It is far from immediately clear, though, why this proposed distinction between two types of happiness should pose any sort of 'however,' or, indeed, have any relevance at all, to that preceding argument. It seems more than clear that Kant takes it to do so, though, not only from the wording of this initial transition, but from the fact that, having dispensed with the proposed distinction to his satisfaction with the odd response which we have already seen, that 'someone who is said to feel happy in the mere consciousness of his rectitude already possesses the perfection... which is also a duty,' he begins the next paragraph by drawing the conclusion that "[w]hen it comes to promoting happiness as an end that is also a duty, this must therefore be the happiness of *other* human beings...."³³⁶ Although the 'therefore' here could, perhaps, indicate a return to the topic of the first sentence of the preceding paragraph, skipping over the intervening discussion entirely, and drawing its conclusion exclusively from the argument offered there, this seems unlikely. Rather, it seems to suggest that Kant takes this intervening discussion of the proposed distinction to contribute in some way to his argument for this point, and the conclusion he draws here to follow from the entire preceding paragraph. It is less than

³³⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:388.

immediately obvious, however, what sort of contribution to this argument Kant could take his odd discussion of this proposed distinction to make. If we examine more closely the argument that Kant takes himself to be offering in the first few lines of the passage though, in conjunction with claims he has made elsewhere in *The Metaphysics of Morals* about the nature of happiness, a plausible picture of how he might take these two points to be connected begins to emerge.

If we turn our attention to Kant's initial presentation of this argument against a duty to make our own happiness our end, in section IV, which he is recapitulating here, we can see that his presentation of the argument here is relying on an implicit premise, which was there made explicit: the crucial claim that "what everyone already wants unavoidably, of his own accord, does not come under the concept of *duty*, which is *constraint* to an end adopted reluctantly."³³⁷ Without this additional premise, the unavoidability of our pursuit of our own happiness by human nature has no obvious bearing on whether or not we could have a duty to this pursuit, and, so, the additional claim is clearly needed. But, if we accept the proposed distinction between 'natural' and 'moral' happiness, an obvious objection to the applicability of this premise, and so to Kant's argument, quickly becomes available. Although it is true, on Kant's account, that all human beings unavoidably seek happiness, it is *not* true that we all seek this happiness in similar ways. Rather, he has argued,

Only experience can teach what brings us joy. Only the natural drives for food, sex, rest, and movement and (as our natural predispositions develop) for honor, for enlarging our cognition, and

³³⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:386.

so forth, can tell each of us, and each only in his particular way, in what he will *find* those joys; and, in the same way, only experience can teach him the means by which to seek them.³³⁸

It is for this very reason, he claims, that eudaimonism (as he understands it)³³⁹ can never provide us with an adequate theory of morals, that, "[i]f the doctrine of morals were merely the doctrine of happiness it would be absurd to seek *a priori* principles for it."³⁴⁰ Because we can only know what makes us happy through experience, he argues, and because experience will teach each of us differently in this respect, such that there is no single answer to what constitutes happiness for a being like us, but many different answers which vary widely from person to person,

All apparently *a priori* reasoning about this comes down to nothing but experience raised by induction to generality, a generality (*secundum principia generalis, non universalis*) still so tenuous that everyone must be allowed countless exceptions in order to adapt his choice of a way of life to his particular inclinations and his susceptibility to satisfaction and still, in the end, to become prudent only from his own or others' misfortunes.³⁴¹

If we accept the proposed distinction between 'moral' and 'natural' happiness, then, the following objection to Kant's argument against a duty to our own happiness can be made: although we must all by our nature seek happiness, we are not, by our nature, necessitated to seek happiness of any particular sort, or in any particular way. We are not, therefore, 'unavoidably' driven to seek *moral* happiness, specifically; although we must all seek out happiness of *some* kind, this may well end with 'natural' happiness. To the extent that it is open to us to choose, then, whether or not we pursue such 'moral' happiness, the choice to

³³⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 9, 6:215.

³³⁹ Whether this understanding of eudaimonism is itself either an accurate or fair one is a question for another time.

³⁴⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 9, 6:215.

³⁴¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 9-10, 6:215-6.

pursue happiness of this sort, rather than only of some 'natural' kind, is as much subject to 'constraint' as any other choice, and so, just as subject to duty.

Deploying this objection, then, the opponent of Kant's claim that there is no duty to make one's own happiness one's end might contend that, given this distinction between 'moral' and 'natural' happiness, Kant's argument fails. Although his argument may show that we have no duty to pursue our own 'natural' happiness, they may claim, if we accept its premises, it gives us no reason to think that we cannot have a duty to make our own 'moral' happiness our end. And, read as a reply to this objection, Kant's otherwise cryptic remarks here begin to make much better sense. How is it, we have wondered above, that he takes his claim that 'someone who is said to feel happy in the mere consciousness of his rectitude already possesses the perfection which was explained...as that end which is also a duty' to be compatible with, much less to support or explain, his claim that this 'kind of feeling belongs only under the preceding heading, namely perfection'? If we read these two claims as responding, not to the proposed distinction between 'moral' and 'natural' happiness itself, but to the above counter-argument in defense of a duty to make our own moral happiness our end, we can understand the two claims as related in the following way. In his discussion of 'perfection' in the preceding section, Kant has made explicitly clear that moral perfection is most centrally concerned not only with one's actions, but one's will:

A human being has a duty to carry the cultivation of his *will* up to the purest virtuous disposition, in which the *law* becomes also the incentive to his actions that conform with duty and he obeys the law from duty. This disposition is inner morally practical perfection.³⁴²

But, if it is true, then, as Kant claims, that a genuinely 'moral' happiness can be experienced only by those who 'already possess the perfection' about which he is here speaking, such that moral 'perfection,' of whatever degree, is a necessary precondition for 'moral' happiness, then making one's own 'moral' happiness one's end would thus be self-defeating. To take such 'moral' happiness as one's end, one would have to will its necessary preconditions, and so, to will one's own moral perfection, instrumentally to this end of 'moral' happiness. To will one's moral perfection as a means to one's own happiness in this way, however, would be to do one's duty not 'from duty,' but from what Kant considers a 'pathological principle'³⁴³ of expected benefit to oneself. Since moral perfection is constituted by that 'purest virtuous disposition,' then, 'in which the law becomes also the incentive' and one 'obeys the law from duty,' rather than from any such 'pathological principle,' to make one's own 'moral' happiness one's end in this way would make one incapable of achieving that happiness, by making one incapable of the moral 'perfection' which such happiness requires. That is, such a will would, in one of Kant's senses, involve a 'contradiction,' by being so structured as to undermine its own end. Such an argument would point us back, again, moreover, to one of his earlier points against eudaimonism, not that there is no such thing as 'moral' happiness, but rather, that such happiness can play no significant role in moral motivation:

³⁴² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 151, 6:387.

³⁴³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 143, 6:378.

When a thoughtful human being has overcome incentives to vice and is aware of having done his often bitter duty, he finds himself in a state that could well be called happiness, a state of contentment and peace of soul in which virtue is its own reward. – Now a *eudaemonist* says: this delight, this happiness, is really his motive for acting virtuously. The concept of duty does not determine his will *directly*; he is moved to do his duty only *by means of* the happiness he anticipates. But there is also a *contradiction* in this subtle reasoning. For, on the one hand he ought to fulfill his duty without first asking what effect this will have on his happiness, and so on *moral* grounds; ...³⁴⁴

And if this is the nature of the argument that Kant is making here, not against 'moral' happiness, *per se*, but against a specific conception of the role that such 'moral' happiness could play in our moral motivation, and it is *this* that he takes to constitute a 'misuse of the word happiness' and involve a 'contradiction,' of the sort that we have just discussed, then his apparent willingness to rely upon this very same distinction, between 'moral' and 'natural' happiness, in his own subsequent arguments becomes much less mysterious. Moreover, we can now begin to see how he might take this argument, to which he takes himself to have gestured with the claim that perfection is a precondition for 'moral' happiness, to support his claim that such 'moral' happiness 'belongs only under the preceding heading, namely perfection.' That is, he might mean by this claim, not, as it at first appears, that such happiness belongs only under the *name* of 'perfection,' and not that of 'happiness' at all, but, rather, that, insofar as such happiness can be achieved only as a consequence of moral perfection, and never by willing or aiming at that happiness itself, the discussion of such happiness belongs with the discussion of that perfection, not with that of other kinds of happiness. That is, that the topic of such happiness rightly belongs, in his view, not here, in this section, with the discussion of 'the happiness of others' but,

³⁴⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 142, 6:377-8.

literally, 'under the preceding heading, namely perfection,' that is, in the preceding section, "*One's Own Perfection*."³⁴⁵

VIII. 'Moral' Happiness

Read in this way, moreover, Kant's arguments here no longer seem to stand in tension with his later claims about the existence of a distinctively 'moral pleasure' and "contentment,"³⁴⁶ which, given what he has said elsewhere about the relationship between 'pleasure' and 'happiness,' would seem to sit uneasily beside a claim that there is no such thing as 'moral happiness' at all. With respect to duties of "wide obligation,"³⁴⁷ in particular, for example, the fulfillment of which is "meritorious,"³⁴⁸ he argues that

...there is a subjective principle of ethical *reward*, that is, a receptivity to being rewarded in accordance with laws of virtue: the reward, namely, of a moral pleasure that goes beyond mere contentment with oneself (which can be merely negative) and which is celebrated in the saying that, through consciousness of this pleasure, virtue is its own reward.³⁴⁹

Reading the passage in this way also allows us to make much better sense of Kant's later claims that we should, to at least some extent, treat the 'moral well-being' of others as among those factors to which we are required to attend by our duty to make their happiness our end:

The happiness of others also includes their *moral well-being* (*salubritas moralis*), and we have a duty, but only a negative one, to promote this. Although the *pain* one feels from the pangs of conscience has a moral source it is still a natural effect, like grief, fear, or any other state of suffering.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:386.

³⁴⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391.

³⁴⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391.

³⁴⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 153, 6:390.

³⁴⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391.

³⁵⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 156, 6:394.

It would seem a very strange position to hold that, although pain with a moral source was a 'natural effect,' in this way, and a loss to one's moral well-being was a blow to one's happiness, pleasure or satisfaction with a moral source was not such a 'natural effect,' and an improvement in one's moral well-being was not a contribution to one's happiness. If we read Kant's argument above in the way we have suggested, however, such that he is not dismissing the existence of 'moral happiness,' but only what he takes to be the implied contention that we could have a duty to make our own happiness of this sort our end, then we are required to attribute no such convoluted reasoning to him. Rather, his position with respect to such happiness becomes a relatively straightforward one, in parallel to his position on happiness overall: although we have no duty to make our own moral happiness our end, we do have a duty, though only a wide one, to promote this sort of happiness for others, to the extent that it is an important component of their happiness as a whole.

But why, then, we might ask, is this duty to promote the 'moral' happiness of others 'only a negative one,' when our duty to promote the happiness of others overall is not restricted in this way? And the answer to this, it would seem, points us back to two important ideas we have already seen. The first, if we recall, is Kant's dual claim about the *way* in which it is possible for us, consistent with the respect which we are required to maintain for the autonomy of others, to make their happiness our end at all. That is, that 'I cannot do good to anyone in accordance with *my* concepts of happiness ... only in accordance with *his* concepts of happiness,' and that 'it is for them to decide what they

count as belonging to their happiness,' although 'it is open to me to refuse them many things which *they* think will make them happy but that I do not.' That is, that, in promoting the happiness of others, my *positive* duty can be only to promote those ends which they have set for themselves, or themselves consider to be part of their happiness. I cannot, without violating the respect which I owe to them, work to impose upon another the conditions of life which I consider to constitute or contribute to happiness, irrespective of their own ends or wishes, 'thinking to benefit him by forcing a gift upon him.' Since my duty to promote the happiness of others, however, is a wide one, I am permitted to choose which of another's chosen ends I adopt as my own in discharging this duty to promote their happiness, and am not required to adopt as my own those ends of theirs which may strike me as misguided, 'as long as they have no right to demand them from me as what is theirs.' The second, somewhat less obviously, is the claim about 'moral' happiness, specifically, which we have deployed in reconstructing the objection against which Kant takes himself to be arguing above, and which it seems that he must himself accept, given what he has said about the nature of happiness in general. That is, that, although it is unavoidable by human nature that we should all seek happiness, there is no such necessity in our nature to seek this happiness in any particular or uniform way, such that it is a matter of choice for each individual whether or not such 'moral' happiness will at all accord with '*his* concepts of happiness,' just as it is a matter of choice whether, and to what extent, 'moral perfection' will be among his ends. To the extent that it might

not, then, we can have no *right*, and thus no *duty*, to positively promote, on his presumed behalf, an end which may not be his own.

The case of moral *pain*, however, that is, of the 'pangs of conscience,' is, in Kant's view, entirely different. This suffering, which follows upon the violation of duty, is, in his view, inescapable in human nature, insofar as the voice of conscience, as the voice of reason within us,³⁵¹ is ineliminable in even the most debased of human beings. "For, conscience is practical reason holding the human being's duty before him for his acquittal or condemnation in every case that comes under a law,"³⁵² and "every human being (as a moral being) has it in him originally."³⁵³ When conscience passes judgment on our actions in this way, moreover, it cannot but "affect moral feeling by its act,"³⁵⁴ and so, as our "internal judge, ... pronounces the sentence of happiness or misery as the moral results of the deed."³⁵⁵ This felt 'sentence' of conscience, then, like the judgment itself, cannot be avoided, by any human agent. Rather,

Every human being has a conscience and finds himself observed, threatened, and, in general, kept in awe (respect coupled with fear) by an internal judge; and this authority watching over the law in him is not something that he himself (voluntarily) *makes*, but something incorporated in his being. It follows him like a shadow when he plans to escape. He can indeed stun himself or put himself to sleep by pleasures and distractions, but he cannot help coming to himself or waking up from time to time; and when he does, he hears at once its fearful voice. He can at most, in extreme depravity, bring himself to *heed* it no longer, but he still cannot help *hearing* it.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ Although the application of the law in conscience to a specific deed or case is always, also, a matter for the faculty of judgment, see, e.g., *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 189, 6:438.

³⁵² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 160, 6:400.

³⁵³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 160, 6:399.

³⁵⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 160, 6:400.

³⁵⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 189, 6:439, footnote.

³⁵⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 189, 6:438.

The 'happiness' in question here, however, is explicitly not the sort of 'positive' happiness involving 'moral pleasure that goes beyond mere contentment with oneself' which we have seen Kant discuss above in connection with virtue, but, rather, an exclusively negative 'happiness,' which comes with the absence of pain. Since the 'verdict' of conscience, properly speaking, is always only one of "*acquitting or condemning*,"³⁵⁷ he argues, rather than of ascribing any merit,

It should be noted that when conscience acquits him it can never decide on a *reward (praemium)*, something gained that was not his before, but can bring with it only *rejoicing* at having escaped the danger of being found punishable. Hence the blessedness found in the comforting encouragement of one's conscience is not *positive* (joy) but merely *negative* (relief from preceding anxiety); and this alone is what can be ascribed to virtue, as a struggle against the influence of the evil principle in a human being.³⁵⁸

The 'happiness' at stake here, then, is only that of avoiding moral suffering or pain, and that pain itself is a pain to which every human being, regardless of their own chosen ends or 'concepts of happiness,' is equally subject.

Unlike 'moral' happiness in the 'positive' sense, then, it seems that, insofar as we are licensed to presume, as it would seem that Kant believes we are, that any individual will have the avoidance of suffering or pain in general, and so, of any given type of pain to which they are subject, in particular, among their own ends, we are licensed to presume that they will have among their ends the avoidance of this moral pain or suffering. To the extent that our duty to the happiness of others demands that we adopt the ends of others as our own, then, it would seem that we have a general duty, though only an imperfect one, to help our fellow human beings avoid this sort of moral pain, in a

³⁵⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 190, 6:440.

³⁵⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 190-1, 6:440.

way in which we do not have a corresponding duty to promote their 'positive' moral happiness, even by omission.³⁵⁹ But why, then, again, is this duty 'only a negative one'? That is, why does it require of us only omissions, rather than acts? This, it would seem, has to do not only with the limitations which respect imposes on us with regard to the chosen ends of others, but also with the way in which this sort of moral pain, in particular, is related to individual instances of choice.

The object of such 'pangs of conscience,' Kant argues, is always "a *deed*,"³⁶⁰ that is,

An action... insofar as it comes under obligatory laws and hence, insofar as the subject, in doing it, is considered in terms of the freedom of his choice. By such an action the agent is regarded as the *author* of its effect, and this, together with the action itself, can be *imputed* to him...³⁶¹

Moreover, it is not the case, in his view, that our conscience can plague us in this way for an act which we did not realize was a moral infraction at the time that we chose it.

Rather, "[i]n a case involving conscience..., a human being thinks of conscience as *warning* him (*praemonens*) before he makes his decision,"³⁶² and each of us, however strongly we may find ourselves inclined to act contrary to our duty,

finds that *as a moral being* he is also holy enough to break the inner law *reluctantly*; for there is no human being so depraved as not to feel an opposition to breaking it and an abhorrence of himself in the face of which he has to constrain himself {to break the law}.³⁶³

³⁵⁹ Though we may be *licensed* to do so, in this way.

³⁶⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 189, 6:438

³⁶¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 16, 6:223.

³⁶² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 190, 6:440.

³⁶³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 145, 6:380, footnote.

In any case where someone acts in such a way that their conscience may pain them for it, then, we must view this action as a legitimate exercise of their free choice, and, to the extent that it is at odds with their own end of avoiding the pain which their conscience will inflict on them for it, presume this cost to be one which they have chosen to accept, in service to some other of their ends. Unless they violate our own right or another's by so acting, then, we can have no right, consistent with respect for them, to take positive action to stop them from acting in this way. Thus, "[t]o see to it that another does not deservedly suffer this inner reproach is not *my* duty but *his affair*,"³⁶⁴ and I can serve his interest in avoiding this sort of pain, consistent with the respect I owe to him, only by omitting those actions on my own part which might somehow contribute to the likelihood that he will make a choice which is contrary to the demands of his conscience in this way. As a component of my duty to his happiness, then,

it is my duty to refrain from doing anything that, considering the nature of a human being, could tempt him to do something for which his conscience could afterwards pain him, to refrain from what is called giving scandal.³⁶⁵

Since this is a matter of my duty to his happiness, however, and so, as a matter of promoting an end, a matter of judgment, "this concern for others' moral contentment does not admit of determinate limits being assigned to it, so that the obligation resting on it is only a wide one."³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 156, 6:394.

³⁶⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 156, 6:394.

³⁶⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 156, 6:394.

IX. The Other's Ends

If Kant does accept the existence of such 'moral happiness,' then, as we have just argued above that he seems to do, as well as the potential importance of this sort of happiness to the overall happiness of others, to which end our 'duties of love' are directed, then perhaps it is plausible that the 'perfect' friend's duty 'to point out the other's faults to him' could be explained as a 'duty of love,' after all, and in just the relatively straightforward sort of way which we have already suggested above. But, if this is the case, then how is it that this duty on the part of the friends has become not only a 'positive' one, in the sense of a duty to action, rather than just to omission, but, moreover, it would seem, a duty to promote the friend's moral or characterological betterment, and so, his 'positive' moral happiness or joy, rather than just to protect him from moral infraction and pain? An answer to this might begin to take shape from the reasons we have given above as to why our duty to the happiness of others in general does not, given Kant's claim that the 'happiness of others also includes their *moral well-being*,' generate for us a positive duty to promote the 'moral well-being' of our fellow human beings in general in this way. That is, we may begin to find an answer in the fact that it would seem, as we have seen above, that the reason we do not have such a positive duty to the moral betterment of our fellow human beings in general is that positive actions toward this end on our part would be incompatible, given what Kant has said about the ways in which respect requires us to defer in our actions to promote the happiness of others to their own conceptions of happiness and their own chosen ends, with the respect which we

owe to them. Since respect for them demands that we should not so act on their behalf, then, we can have no moral right so to act, and, therefore, no such duty.

As we have also seen above, however, the reasons that so acting would be incompatible with the respect which we owe to our fellow human beings are ones which may not fully apply in the case of our friends, or, at least, of certain kinds of friends, in certain circumstances. As we have argued above, it is because we do not know whether, or to what extent, a given individual's own 'concepts of happiness' or chosen ends may include moral happiness or perfection that we cannot act positively to further these ends in the service of their happiness, without thereby violating the respect which we owe to them. Similarly, in the case of preventing moral pain, the avoidance of which we can legitimately presume others to have among their ends, it is because we cannot know what other ends of theirs they may be serving with a given choice, or in what way, and so, cannot know to what extent that choice may, by their own lights, and not only by ours, be in some way a mistaken one, that we are not licensed to act positively, in at least certain limited ways, to prevent them from so acting. Within the context of at least a 'moral' friendship,³⁶⁷ however, we have reason to expect that our position would be different. Such friends, who share 'complete confidence... in revealing their secret judgments and feelings to each other,' as well as their 'faults,' 'views,' and 'general outlook on things,' and each of whom relies upon his total trust in the other to fulfill his 'need to *reveal* himself,' could be justly expected to share a much deeper understanding of one another's 'concepts

³⁶⁷ Or, at least, a perfectly, or sufficiently well, realized instance of one.

of happiness' and chosen ends than we would be licensed to attribute to ourselves in the case of our fellow human beings in general. Such friends, we might expect, would not only have a good enough sense of one another's chosen ends to know, in at least many cases, whether or not 'moral perfection' (or some more specific aspect thereof) was among those chosen ends, they might also, very reasonably, be expected to know one another well enough to infer, in at least many instances, the nature of the internal deliberations in which their friend would engage in the process of making a particular choice. The 'moral' friends, then, we might reasonably expect, would be licensed, on the basis of this greater insight into one another's ends and deliberative processes, to take positive action to promote one another's 'moral well-being' or positive moral perfection, in a way that others were not, to the extent that they knew these actions to be compatible with their friend's own ends of moral perfection or 'concepts of happiness,' provided that these actions did not violate respect for their friend in some other way.

To the extent that the 'moral' happiness of others is among those aspects of their happiness to which our duties of love require us to attend, then, and it is only because we are not, under ordinary circumstances, able to act in the interest of another's moral perfection or well-being without thereby violating our required respect for them as human beings that we do not have a wide duty to act in this way as an aspect of our general duty to promote the happiness of others, we would expect that the 'moral,' friends, who *are* able so to act without violating respect for one another, would have a duty, though only a wide one, to act in this way. That is, one would expect that the 'moral' friends, in virtue

of their special insight into one another's ends and characters, would, in contrast to the rest of us, have a wide duty both to promote their friend's positive 'moral perfection,' to the extent that this was among their friend's own ends, and to take positive action to prevent him from acting in ways for which his conscience would pain him, to the extent that such actions were not otherwise incompatible with the respect they owed to him as a fellow human being. And, because these duties would be ones which followed from their duty to promote their friend's happiness, as an instance of their broader duty to promote the happiness of their fellow human beings in general, to the extent that the 'moral' friends did have such duties, these duties would be 'duties of love'.

X. Perfect Friendship

But, if this is how one can come to have such duties to the moral well-being of another, through the special insight into their chosen ends and deliberative processes provided by the total confidence and trust found within this rare sort of 'moral' friendship, then why does Kant mention a duty of this sort only in discussing the nature of his 'perfect' friendship instead, and not in his discussion of of this 'moral' sort of friendship at all? The first part of our answer to this question would seem to be that, to the extent that he does take such duties to exist within a 'perfect' friendship, if we find the arguments above to be convincing ones, and unless we can provide an alternative way in which such duties might come to be possible within particular kinds of relationships despite their incompatibility in other contexts with the basic requirements of respect for other human beings, it would seem that Kant does assume, as we had wondered above if he might, that

a 'perfect' friendship of this kind will also, just in virtue of being such a friendship, be a friendship of his 'moral' sort as well. Such a 'perfect' friendship will, then, as we had wondered above whether it might, turn out to be one in which both Kant's 'moral' friendship and his 'pragmatic' friendship are to be found together. This would not seem to offer us an answer, however, if what we have said above is true, as to why he would neglect to mention any such additional duties to the moral well-being of others, which arise in the context of his 'moral' friendship in particular, in his discussion of friendship of this type. Surely, such an opening up of new moral arenas in our duty to one another's happiness would be an effect well worth mentioning, if it were indeed a consequence of entering into such friendships. If we look again at how Kant has defined such 'moral' friendship, however, in contrast to 'pragmatic' friendship in particular, we can see why he might choose to leave such a discussion of the new 'duties of love' which arise from this sort of a friendship aside from his discussion of the nature of such friendship itself, even if these new duties did arise, as we have argued above, specifically from the conditions within a friendship of this kind.

And this is because, as we have seen, although the 'moral' friends do have the same 'duties of love' to one another's happiness that any of us have to the happiness of any other human being, they have no special interest in or obligation to the happiness of one another in particular, at least in virtue of their 'moral' friendship merely as such. It is 'pragmatic' friendship, not 'moral' friendship, which 'burdens itself with the ends of

others.³⁶⁸ And it is precisely because of this interest which 'pragmatic' friendship requires in the ends, or the happiness, of others, it seems, that such friendship cannot, in Kant's view, unlike 'moral' friendship, actually exist 'in its perfection.' The 'merely moral' friends, then, though their intimacy may allow them to act in the interest of one another's moral well-being or happiness as a part of their duty to the happiness of others in general, have no particular reason to fulfill their duty to the happiness of others in this way rather than any other. For them, this new ability to benefit their friends' happiness by contributing to their moral perfection is no different from any other opportunity to benefit the happiness of others they might come to have as a result of specialist knowledge. Though their ability, and duty, so to act, then, is a consequence of their 'moral' friendship, to do so is no part of that friendship as such. Only where such 'merely moral' friendship is combined with 'pragmatic' friendship, in which the happiness or well-being of each friend becomes a special concern of the other's, does this new way of fulfilling their wide duty of love, through a service to their friend's moral well-being or happiness, become particularly salient. If Kant's 'perfect' friendship is one in which these two sorts of friendship, the 'moral' and the 'pragmatic,' are to be found together, then, as we have

³⁶⁸ How exactly it is that Kant takes special *interest* in the happiness or well-being of another to relate to or result in special *obligation* to that happiness or well-being is a serious question, and one to which the answer is not clear. That he does take there to be an important relationship between the two, however, and a special obligation of some sort to exist to the happiness or well-being of certain of our social intimates, seems clear, not only from these passages on friendship themselves, but from elsewhere in the text. This is most explicit, perhaps, in an unfortunately thorny passage at 6:451-2 (p. 200-1), where, in raising a problem for the duty of benevolence, he points out that "...one human being is closer to me than another, and in benevolence I am closest to myself." But, "[i]f one is closer to me than another (in the duty of benevolence) and I am therefore under obligation to greater benevolence to one than to the other but am admittedly closer to myself (even in accordance with duty) than to any other, then it would seem that I cannot, without contradicting myself, say that I ought to love every human being as myself, since the measure of self-love would allow for no difference in degree."

argued above that it is, and it is only in addressing friendship of this type that he explicitly addresses a friendship in which this is the case, then it is perhaps not so strange that it would also be here, in his discussion of this 'perfect' friendship, that he addresses this new kind of duty to our friends.

XI. The Other's Perfection

Even if all of this is true, however, it would not seem to have fully solved our problem for explaining the 'perfect' friend's duty to 'point out the other's faults to him' in this way. And this is because, as we have seen above, Kant has appeared not only to disallow the possibility of a duty to the moral perfection of others qualifying as a duty of love, but of any such duty to the moral perfection of others existing at all. As we have already noted, he claims quite prominently in the Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue that 'it is a contradiction for me to make another's *perfection* my end and consider myself under obligation to promote this.' And this would certainly seem, at first blush, to preclude any duty to the moral perfection of another. How, then, could we be right in thinking that his argument here implies just such a duty to one another's moral perfection on the part of the 'perfect' friends? The first answer we can offer to this worry, perhaps, is one raised by the arguments we have seen Kant himself make above with respect to the sense in which we can be said to have a duty, in some cases, to promote our own happiness, although it is never our duty to make our own happiness our end. Recall, there, his claim that, in such cases, 'the end is not the subject's happiness, but his morality,' such that 'it is not my happiness but the preservation of my moral integrity that

is my end and also my duty.' The promotion of my own happiness, in such a case, he argues, 'is not directly a duty, but indirectly it can well be a duty,' to the extent that it is a '*permitted* means' of furthering my required end of moral perfection.³⁶⁹ Given the way that we have characterized the duty we can come to have to promote the moral perfection of our friend, then, as a duty of love implied, under certain circumstances, by our duty to promote their moral well-being or happiness, as a part of our duty to promote their well-being or happiness overall, it would seem that this sort of an argument might apply equally well in this case. Just as in Kant's argument above it is not because we have made, or have a duty to make, our own happiness, 'directly,' our end that we come to have such a duty, in some cases, to promote our own happiness, but rather because we have made, as we have a duty to make, our own moral perfection our end, that we come, 'indirectly,' to have such a duty, in the case of our 'perfect' friends' perfection it is not because we have made, or have a duty to make, their moral perfection, 'directly,' our end that we come to have this duty to promote their perfection, but rather because we have made their happiness, and so their own ends, our end, that we come, 'indirectly,' to have such a duty. Our duty to the moral perfection of our friends, when we have it, derives from our duty to their happiness, and where they do not themselves have such moral perfection among their chosen ends, we can come to have no such duty. The end, then, Kant might equally well claim in such a case, it seems, is not the subject's morality, but

³⁶⁹ Insofar as this can, at least sometimes, be served, Kant would seem to accept, by avoiding the near occasion of sin.

his happiness. And so, it would seem, at least plausibly, that his argument above against the possibility of a duty to make another's moral perfection one's end would not apply.

One might worry that this sort of a response, however, when applied to our case, could potentially rely upon a messy distinction between final ends,³⁷⁰ as 'ends' proper, and 'ends' of other sorts, given Kant's characterization of our duty to make the happiness of others our end as a duty to make the ends of others our own. Fortunately, we may be able to give another, and, perhaps, in some ways, more illuminating, answer to this worry, by engaging more directly with the somewhat puzzling argument which Kant offers us here in support of his claim that we can have no such duty to make the perfection of others our end. He has argued, recall, that 'it is a contradiction for me to make another's *perfection* my end and consider myself under obligation to promote this' because 'the *perfection* of another human being, as a person, consists just in this: that he *himself* is able to set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty...' And this, it would seem, is meant to be something which I can have no duty to promote, at least as an end, because 'it is self-contradictory to require that I do (make it my duty to do) something that only the other himself can do.' But how, more precisely, is this argument intended to run? What, exactly, is it meant to be, here, 'that only the other himself can do'? Kant has argued extensively elsewhere that actually setting an end is something that only the person whose end it is can do. As he has defined it, "[a]n **end** is an *object* of free

³⁷⁰ Though this is not, by and large, Kant's language.

choice,"³⁷¹ and, as such, he has argued, "only I myself can *make* something my end."³⁷² Moreover, "every action... has its end"³⁷³ and "I can have no end without making it an end for myself."³⁷⁴ Although "I can indeed be constrained by others to perform *actions* that are directed as means to an end,"³⁷⁵ that is, to some end of theirs, although this end is not my own, "[t]o have an end that I have not myself made an end is self-contradictory, an act of freedom which is yet not free."³⁷⁶ So, perhaps this is what he has in mind, here. But, even if we take Kant to be claiming here, as is far from clear from the somewhat ambiguous way in which he has put things, that another's perfection consists just in his actually so setting his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty (presumably on whatever occasions the need for him to set an end should arise), it follows from this only that the other's perfection *consists* in 'something that only the other himself can do.' And this would not yet seem, on its own, to be enough to make the argument go through. It is far from clear, that is, even given this, why we should think that I would be required to *do* that in which another's perfection *consists* simply in order to make that perfection my end, and take action to promote it. This is not something which we seem to expect at all in the many much more ordinary cases of this sort which we encounter, and we typically take the fact that another's end consists in something that only they themselves can do to

³⁷¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 149, 6:385.

³⁷² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 146, 6:381.

³⁷³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 149, 6:385.

³⁷⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 147, 6:381.

³⁷⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 146, 6:381.

³⁷⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 147, 6:381.

pose no obstacle to our making it an end of ours as well, although this may make it somewhat more difficult for us to find ways of promoting it.

If you were to make it your end, for example, to play the piano, then this end of yours would certainly seem to consist in something that only you yourself could do; my playing the piano for you, or someone else's doing so, would not satisfy this end. But this is no reason to think, it seems, that I could not, therefore, make it an end of mine that this end of yours should be realized,³⁷⁷ and take action to promote it, say, by helping you to access a piano, or learn to read sheet music. And it is difficult to imagine what else Kant would mean, by making the end of another our own, than that we should make it an end of ours that that which is their end should be accomplished. It seems, then, if we are not to attribute a simple confusion to Kant, that we should not take him to mean, here, that another's perfection is something that only he himself can have as an end, and be able to promote as such, simply because that perfection consists in an action or activity in which only he himself can engage. Rather, it seems, Kant must take it to be obvious, in some other way, from the characterization he has given us here of what our perfection consists in, why making such perfection in another one's end, and promoting it as such, would be something that only the other himself could do.

XII. Moral Perfection

And perhaps the place to start, in attempting to unravel why it is that Kant might think this, is with the somewhat frustrating ambiguity we have pointed out above in the

³⁷⁷ Or, perhaps, given Kant's language, we would want to say, make it an end of mine, also, that you should play the piano, because this is an end of yours.

way that he has characterized what the other's perfection consists in here. It is unclear, it seems, from the way that he has put the claim, whether he means this perfection to consist just in the other's so setting his end, on the relevant occasions, and so, in something like an action or activity of his, or rather, as would seem to be the slightly more natural reading, modulo the further confusion introduced by its apparent identification with the thing 'that only the other himself can do,' in the other's ability so to set his end, and so, in something more like a developed capacity of his so to act. Fortunately, if we recall above, Kant's discussions elsewhere in *The Doctrine of Virtue* of the nature of our own perfection, and our duty to it, would seem to offer us strong guidance as to how we could best read this claim. As we have already seen above, Kant claims quite clearly in his subsequent discussion of our own perfection that our moral perfection, at least, is not simply an action or activity, but rather, a disposition to action of a certain sort, specifically, 'the purest virtuous disposition, in which the law becomes also the incentive to... actions that conform with duty' and one 'obeys the law from duty.' 'This disposition' he claims, 'is inner morally practical perfection.' However, he goes on to elaborate elsewhere, in his discussion of our duties of virtue to ourselves, that "this perfection consists,"³⁷⁸ more precisely, in two aspects: on the one hand,

subjectively in the *purity* (*puritas moralis*) of one's disposition to duty, namely, in the law being by itself alone the incentive, even without the admixture of aims derived from sensibility, and in actions being done not only in conformity with duty but also *from duty*.³⁷⁹

and, on the other,

³⁷⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

³⁷⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

objectively in fulfilling all one's duties and in attaining completely one's moral end with regard to oneself. Here, the command is "be perfect." But a human being's striving after this end always remains only a progress from *one* perfection to another.³⁸⁰

One's moral perfection, then, it would seem, requires both that one's actions be always in accordance with one's duty, and that one always, in performing one's duties, be doing so from duty, in addition to requiring that one should be consistently disposed so to act. That is, it would seem, it consists not only in one's disposition to act always in accordance with one's duty, and from duty, regardless of all other incentives, but also in one's actually so acting. This additional complexity, then, may explain for us the seeming ambiguity in Kant's characterization of the other's perfection above. It is unclear, it seems, from the way that he has put the claim, whether the other's perfection is meant to consist in his actually setting his ends in accordance with his own concepts of duty, or rather, in his ability so to set his ends, because, on Kant's more developed understanding, which he has not yet gone on to lay out by this point in his arguments, it in fact consists in both, together: the disposition so to act, perhaps first and even primarily, insofar as 'perfection' is seen here as a quality possessed by the agent, but, also, crucially, this disposition as realized in the actions towards which the agent is so disposed.

And this disposition itself, Kant argues, as a possible object of duty, an end which one can be required by duty to have for oneself, like one's "natural perfection"³⁸¹ insofar as there can be a duty to this, "must be put in what can result from his *deeds*, not in mere

³⁸⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

³⁸¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392.

gifts for which he must be indebted to nature; for otherwise it would not be a duty."³⁸²

One cannot have a duty, that is, to that which is merely a matter of fortune or fact, only to that towards which it is possible for one to take action. This disposition, then, can not simply consist in that natural capacity for respect for the law and dutiful action with which Kant has argued that all human beings are, as rational agents, invariably gifted. Rather, like our 'natural perfection,' our moral perfection, as a 'virtuous disposition,' must be something which we can bring about in ourselves through our own actions, if we are to have a duty to make it our end. One's duty to one's own perfection, then, Kant argues, both natural and moral,

can therefore consist only in *cultivating* one's *faculties* (or natural predispositions), the highest of which is *understanding*, the faculty of concepts and so too of those concepts that have to do with duty. At the same time this duty includes the cultivation of one's *will* (moral cast of mind), so as to satisfy all the requirements of duty.³⁸³

Unfortunately Kant offers us very little explanation, in his discussion of our moral perfection more specifically, of what this sort of 'cultivation of one's will' might entail. If moral perfection is to be a matter of 'cultivation' at all, however, it would seem that the 'disposition' in question cannot consist only in those standing commitments which result directly from the choice of our ends. And we may, perhaps, begin to get a sense of what might be involved in such 'cultivation' from what Kant tells us elsewhere about the cultivation in oneself of virtue. There he argues that,

It is... correct to say that the human being is under obligation *to virtue* (as moral strength). For while the capacity (*facultas*) to overcome all opposing sensible impulses can and must be simply

³⁸² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:386.

³⁸³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 150, 6:387.

presupposed in man on account of his freedom, yet this capacity as *strength (robur)* is something he must acquire; and the way to acquire it is to enhance the moral *incentive* (the thought of the law), both by contemplating the dignity of the pure rational law in us (*contemplatione*) and by *practicing* virtue (*exercitio*).³⁸⁴

One might reasonably expect, then, it seems, that the pursuit of our moral 'perfection,' as the cultivation of the 'virtuous disposition' within us, would likewise involve such contemplation and practice. Moreover, in discussing the duties of virtue to oneself, Kant argues that all such duties either stem, in the case of the "[n]egative duties,"³⁸⁵ from a human being's duty to "his moral *self-preservation*,"³⁸⁶ that is, as he goes on to elaborate, from his duty to "the *preservation* of his nature in its perfection (as *receptivity*)"³⁸⁷ or, in the case of the "positive duties,"³⁸⁸ "concern his *perfecting* of himself,"³⁸⁹ that is, "his *cultivation* (active perfecting) of himself."³⁹⁰ It seems plausible, then, that Kant's arguments regarding these 'positive duties' to ourselves might also offer us some insight into what he takes to be involved in such 'cultivation' of ourselves, not only with respect to our 'natural' perfection, but our moral perfection as well.

XIII. 'Know Yourself'

And here, in discussing our positive duties to ourselves, Kant makes a rather striking claim: that "the **First Command** of All Duties to Oneself"³⁹¹ is to

³⁸⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 158-159, 6:397.

³⁸⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

³⁸⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

³⁸⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

³⁸⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

³⁸⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

³⁹⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 175, 6:419.

³⁹¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 191, 6:441.

"*know* (scrutinize, fathom) *yourself*," not in terms of your natural perfection (your fitness or unfitness for all sorts of discretionary or even commanded ends) but rather in terms of your moral perfection in relation to your duty.³⁹²

Pursuing this sort of self-knowledge, then, the knowledge of our own 'moral perfection' as it currently stands, in relation to what duty requires of us, would seem to be a crucial component of what Kant takes the cultivation of such moral perfection to entail, if all 'positive' commands of our duties to ourselves are, as he has argued above that they are, a matter of our self-perfecting 'cultivation.' And to have such self-knowledge, he goes on to elaborate, to know your own 'moral perfection in relation to your duty' in this way, is to

know your heart – whether it is good or evil, whether the source of your actions is pure or impure, and what can be imputed to you as belonging originally to the *substance* of a human being or as derived (acquired or developed) and belonging to your moral *condition*.³⁹³

This sort of self-knowledge, however, is one which Kant has claimed repeatedly elsewhere is unachievable for us in its completeness, and to the attainment of which we can therefore, it seems, have only a wide or imperfect duty, of continual striving.

In two separate discussions of our duty to our own moral perfection specifically, both in the section we have seen above where he discusses the 'subjective' and the 'objective' aspects of our moral perfection, and in his earlier discussion of "the *cultivation of morality* in us"³⁹⁴ as a part of his broader discussion of "One's Own Perfection as an End That Is Also a Duty,"³⁹⁵ Kant puts forward arguments for his claim that our duty to our own moral perfection can be only a wide or imperfect one which appear to be

³⁹² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 191, 6:441.

³⁹³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 191, 6:441.

³⁹⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392.

³⁹⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391.

predicated on the unattainability of full self-knowledge of this sort. In his discussion of 'the cultivation of morality in us' he argues that the duty which each of us has "to do his duty *from duty* (for the law to be not only the rule but also the incentive of his actions)"³⁹⁶ "[a]t first sight... looks like a *narrow* obligation, and the principle of duty seems to prescribe with the precision and strictness of a law not only the *legality* but also the *morality* of every action, that is, the disposition."³⁹⁷ However, he maintains, this appearance proves to be a misleading one,

For a human being cannot see into the depths of his own heart so as to be quite certain, in even a *single* action, of the purity of his moral intention and the sincerity of his disposition, even when he has no doubt about the legality of the action.³⁹⁸

Much less, it would seem, can he do so across time and many cases, in the way that would be needed to acquire a full knowledge of his own 'moral perfection,' in its subjective aspect. And we are prone to error and self-deception in our understanding of ourselves, it seems, not only with respect to the incentives and maxims at play in our individual acts, on his view, but also the extent and the strength of our standing commitments to the maxims and ends duty demands of us. In the case of the first, Kant argues, for example, one "[v]ery often... mistakes his own weakness, which counsels him against the venture of a misdeed, for virtue (which is the concept of strength),"³⁹⁹ while in the case of the second, he rhetorically asks "how many people who have lived long and

³⁹⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392.

³⁹⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392.

³⁹⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392.

³⁹⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:392-3.

guiltless lives may not be merely *fortunate* in having escaped so many temptations?"⁴⁰⁰

This second sort of self-deception, moreover, seems to be a particular worry of Kant's, and he notes specifically in his discussion of our duty to pursue self-knowledge that such knowledge benefits our virtue in part by serving to combat self-deceptions of this second sort, to "counteract that *egotistical* self-esteem which takes mere wishes – wishes that, however ardent, always remain empty of deeds – for proof of a good heart."⁴⁰¹ Whether this second sort of mistake or self-deception can ever be completely escaped is a question Kant seems to leave open, but, with respect to the 'morality' of any individual act he is uncharacteristically clear: "[i]n the case of any deed it remains hidden from the agent himself how much pure moral content there has been in his disposition,"⁴⁰² no matter how successful he may otherwise be in his pursuit of self-knowledge. And it is because of this inevitable self-ignorance, he argues, that not only our duty of acting from duty in acting as duty demands, but also our retrospective duty of moral self-assessment in light of our actions, can be only a wide or imperfect one. In the case of both of these duties, it seems, it is because 'a human being cannot see into the depths of his own heart' that "[t]he law does not prescribe this inner action in the human mind but only the maxim of the action, to strive with all one's might that the thought of duty for its own sake is the sufficient incentive of every action conforming to duty."⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:393.

⁴⁰¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 191, 6:441.

⁴⁰² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:393.

⁴⁰³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155, 6:393.

Similarly, in the section we have seen above, where Kant distinguishes the 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects of our moral perfection, he argues that "[i]t is a human being's duty to *strive* for this perfection, but not to *reach* it (in this life), and his compliance with this duty can, accordingly, consist only in continual progress,"⁴⁰⁴ for this very same reason, that "[t]he depths of the human heart are unfathomable." And here he seems to be at pains to make clear, having introduced the distinction, that our own moral perfection will always be to some extent opaque to us not only in its 'subjective,' but also in its 'objective,' aspect. In the case of the first, he offers us, again, much the same reasons we have already seen, asking rhetorically,

Who knows himself well enough to say, when he feels the incentive to fulfill his duty, whether it proceeds entirely from the representation of the law or whether there are not many other sensible impulses contributing to it that look to one's advantage (or to avoiding what is detrimental) and that, in other circumstances, could just as well serve vice?⁴⁰⁵

While in the case of the second, the argument he offers here is new,

with regard to perfection as a moral end, it is true that in its idea (objectively) there is only *one* virtue (as moral strength of one's maxims); but in fact (subjectively) there is a multitude of virtues, made up of several different qualities....⁴⁰⁶

And, he seems to take it, we can never know for sure, no matter how many of these 'several qualities' we might come to possess, what other, further, qualities still called for by completely 'perfect' virtue might remain unknown to, or absent in, us.⁴⁰⁷ "But" he

⁴⁰⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

⁴⁰⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:447.

⁴⁰⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:447.

⁴⁰⁷ The extent to which this is meant to be a consequence of the 'unfathomable' nature of the human heart, and the extent to which it is meant to be a matter of the theoretical impossibility of fully enumerating this 'multitude of virtues,' or, at least, of knowing whether one has done so fully or not, is not made clear. This part of Kant's argument as a whole, in fact, is somewhat unclear, and I am rather unconfident in my reading of it here, though I hope to explore the point further in the future.

argues, "a sum of virtues such that our cognition of ourselves can never adequately tell us whether it is complete or deficient can be the basis only of an imperfect duty to be perfect."⁴⁰⁸ And it is because of this, he concludes, that "[a]ll duties to oneself regarding the end of humanity in our own person are, therefore, only imperfect duties."⁴⁰⁹

But, if this is the sort of self-knowledge we mean when we talk about what cultivating moral 'perfection' requires of us, the ever-uncertain result of a process of self-reflection taking place as an ongoing effort over time, prone to such self-serving errors and deceptions in addition to its ineliminable opacities, then such 'cultivation' would certainly seem, given all we have said, to be the sort of endeavor in which the 'perfect' friend, in his capacity as 'moral' friend and confidant, invested with a 'pragmatic' friend's commitment to promoting our well-being or happiness, would be ideally suited to assisting us. And indeed, it seems just in respect of this sort of self-knowledge that each friend is most likely to gain from the 'perfect' friend's efforts to 'point out the other's faults to him.' It seems, then, that we have here not only a plausible way in which each 'perfect' friend might help to 'promote' the moral perfection of the other, but even a way in which the perfect friends, specifically, are uniquely well-positioned so to do. Moreover, it would seem, in at least one important respect, that they are obligated by their duty within the friendship to offer this very sort of help. What we can make of Kant's position on the 'cultivation' of moral perfection, then, seems only to offer more support for the idea that

⁴⁰⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:447.

⁴⁰⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 197, 6:447.

giving such aid to their friend's 'cultivation' ought at least to be available to the 'perfect' friend as something they can do, within the context of their friendship, if not also as something to which they can have a duty.

XIV. What Only The Other Can Do

So, it seems that we must ask again, then: how is it that Kant's argument here against the possibility of any such duty on our part is meant to run? How is it that he takes himself to show that there would be a 'contradiction' in our taking up another's perfection as our end, and considering ourselves under obligation to promote it? On the surface of the argument, the apparent identification of that which 'only the other himself can do' with his setting of, or ability to set, 'his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty' would seem to suggest that it is my setting of the other's perfection as my end that is meant somehow to function as a middle term here, so that the thing which it would be 'self-contradictory to require that I do (make it my duty to do)' would be to make the other's perfection my end, and it is because it would be 'contradictory' for me to be required to do this that it would be contradictory for me to consider myself under obligation to promote it as such. If the argument is not to rely on the fairly straightforward mistake we have pointed out above, however, of assuming that one would need oneself to *do* that in which the other's perfection *consists* in order to have or promote that perfection as one's end, it is not at all clear how this claim is meant to be supported. It would seem, rather, that, without presuming this mistake as an implicit premise, the argument simply asserts that making his perfection his end is something that

only the other himself can do, and concludes directly from this that no one else can do it. That is, it would seem that the argument either relies, here, upon a gross equivocation, maintaining that only the other can make his perfection his end, that is, his *own* end, because, presumably, only he can make *any* end his own, and sliding from this claim to the claim that no one else can make his perfection his end, that is, *their* end, since only he can do this, or upon a mere assertion, claiming, without support, that only the other can make his perfection an end at all, and concluding from this unsupported claim what is already contained within it: that no one else can make this perfection an end of theirs. But, perhaps this apparent identification is misleading, and the taking of another's perfection as one's end is not meant to be functioning in this way as a middle term in the argument. Perhaps the argument is meant somehow to show more directly that making the other's perfection one's end and taking action to promote it as such, in conjunction, is 'something that only the other himself can do,' and Kant's claim about what the other's perfection 'consists' in is meant to be playing a more subtle role in establishing this. Perhaps he intends us to take it, here, not that one must *do* that in which another's perfection consists, in order to make this perfection one's end, but, rather, more simply, that one must make that in which the other's perfection consists, or at least some aspect or component thereof, one's end, and must take action to promote that in which it consists, in order to promote it. And this looks to be a much more plausible claim, and one which we can see why Kant might be inclined to presume. But, have we not just argued above that it seems entirely probable that we should be able to do just this, at least in the case of

the perfect friend, given Kant's broader account of what constitutes and contributes to our own and others' moral perfection, specifically? For what reason might Kant take it, here, then, that only the other could make it his end, and promote it as such, that he should be 'able to set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty'?

If we are willing to attribute to Kant a mistake, it seems, and a much more understandable mistake, in this context, than those which we have discussed above, it may be that we can begin to make some better sense of this. That is, if we recall, here, that Kant's overarching aim in this section is to argue that '*one's own happiness and the perfection of others*' cannot be 'ends that would be in themselves duties,' and that he is making this argument about 'another's *perfection*' only in the service of this broader claim, we can imagine that, although he puts this argument forward as though it applies in the case of *any* given other, it may in fact apply only to the case of some indefinite other, since this would be all Kant would need in order to support his broader claim. That is, it may be, here, that Kant has in mind the case of another about whose ends we have no specific knowledge, and no right to make assumptions; another, therefore to whom we have no right to attribute 'perfection' as among those ends which they have adopted as their own. And, if this is the case, then we can begin to see how the argument might be intended to go. Because of the nature of perfection, it seems, and of moral perfection in particular, as concerned not only with the ends which one adopts and acts upon, but with the reasons or 'incentives' for which one adopts these ends, in the case in which another is not themselves in any way committed to cultivating their own perfection, that is, to

themselves furthering this end as one of their own, any action I might take which could otherwise serve to promote this perfection will be unable to do so. If we look at the ways in which one might be capable of acting to promote the perfection of another, as we have discussed and examined them above, we can see that all of these actions depend for their effectiveness not directly upon some natural effect of the action, but upon their contribution, in some way, to an effort or process which can only be undertaken by the choice of the other themselves; all of those factors which might further another's perfection, it seems, depend crucially, for this effect, upon some 'inner action in the human mind,' which only they themselves can choose to take. This would seem to suggest that not only those actions which constitute the other's perfection itself, but even those actions which constitute its cultivation, may be ones which only the other themselves can take, and which we, as their friends, can only enable or facilitate.

And all of this looks very much, in the relevant ways, like our example of your playing the piano, above, in which, although I may well be able to take actions to promote such piano-playing on your part, without myself being capable of doing that in which the piano-playing consists, because this piano-playing can only be realized by your own action, I can do so only by facilitating in various ways this action on your part, or working to provide you with enabling conditions for so acting. And, in which, it seems, as a consequence of this, that should you turn out not to have such piano-playing as an end, or at least an aim,⁴¹⁰ of yours, none of those actions I might take to promote your

⁴¹⁰ If only, perhaps, as a means.

piano-playing in the case where you did have this end or aim will be actions which promote your piano-playing at all. It seems plausible to say, that is, that no matter how many pianos I might provide you with, or how many lessons in reading sheet-music, in the case in which you in no way mean ever to play the piano I have in no way promoted your doing so by doing these things.⁴¹¹ And, likewise, it would seem, in the case of those actions I might take to promote your perfection. No matter how much earnest discussion of the meaning of your actions for your character I might attempt to engage you in, for example, it would seem that, in the case in which you in no way mean to reflect honestly on the moral significance of your own motives and dispositions, I will in no way have promoted your self-knowledge, in the relevant sense, by so doing. At this point, however, we can see an important disanalogy emerge between the piano-playing case and the case of another's perfection. In the ordinary sort of case, like your playing the piano, in which your reasons or 'incentive' for acting, or adopting an end or an aim as your own, are irrelevant, there is an immediately obvious way in which I can still take some action to promote your doing so, even in the case where you lack the relevant end or aim, that is, by providing you with an incentive, or in some other way convincing you, to act or to aim in this way.⁴¹² In the case of promoting your perfection, however, this further course of

⁴¹¹ As many a disappointed grandparent has discovered.

⁴¹² And indeed, in the piano-playing case, we might be inclined to say that I *do* still promote your piano-playing, to some extent, by providing you with access to a piano, etc., even in the case where you do not in any way mean, antecedently, ever to play, insofar as by doing so I exert social pressure on you to adopt this aim, which you did not previously have, in order to please me or to better conform to the expectations of your social position, etc.

action would not seem to be available, or, at least, would not seem to be available in quite the same way.

In the case of those actions you can take to 'cultivate' your own perfection, it seems, whether natural or moral,⁴¹³ and which I as your friend, we have argued above, may be able to facilitate in various ways, undertaking these actions, or similar ones, for reasons unconnected to their contribution to your own perfection will not serve to 'cultivate' your perfection in this way, and may even serve to undermine your progress in this respect, to the extent that this constitutes doing your duty from another incentive than duty itself. It would not seem, then, that I can promote your perfection by providing you with other incentives to undertake such actions, or convincing you to do so in some other way, independent of the end of your own perfection, since your doing so would not then serve to promote this end. But, what of the case of this end itself, the end of your own perfection? Could I not still act to promote your perfection, if in no other way, at least by acting to promote your adopting this end as your own, in the case in which you had not yet done so? I could not, of course, do this by providing you with an alternative incentive for doing so, since any reason for which you might adopt this end, other than that it is your duty to do so, would be self-undermining. It seems that I could very well, however, promote your adopting this end in one obvious way: by providing you with a rational argument showing that it is your duty to make your perfection your end, and thereby persuading you to do so. And indeed, it seems that Kant is attempting to do just this with

⁴¹³ Though it seems clear from Kant's characterization of 'perfection' here that it is 'moral' perfection he primarily has in mind.

many of his arguments here in the Doctrine of Virtue.⁴¹⁴ How, then, if there is a way of promoting your adoption of your own perfection as your end in the case where you have not yet done so, and your doing so is clearly a prerequisite for any further progress you might make towards this end, could Kant maintain, consistently, that it is impossible, in such a case, for me to take action to promote your perfection?⁴¹⁵

Here, it seems, the question becomes somewhat sticky, and our answer perhaps becomes more speculative than we might have hoped, but, there does, at least, seem to be an answer available. And this has to do with the sort of persuasion that one must be employing, it seems, in order to convince someone to adopt an end by showing them that it is their duty to do so in this way. Such a choice, it seems, must be free, on Kant's view, not only in the negative sense of being undetermined by sensible impulses,⁴¹⁶ but in the positive sense of being determined "independently of any empirical conditions"⁴¹⁷ through "a causality of pure reason."⁴¹⁸ One must be *caused* to make this choice, that is, not only independently of any sensible inclinations, it seems, but independently of all sensible conditions entirely, exclusively through the operation of one's own reason, or

⁴¹⁴ Moreover, a significant portion of the Methods of Ethics would seem to be devoted to outlining an effective way of providing such persuasion to one's students, an effort that would surely be pointless if it were impossible to do so.

⁴¹⁵ One might, I suppose, simply claim here that Kant does not take the provision of a prerequisite for the pursuit of some end to constitute a promotion of that end, but, without further reason to suppose this, it would seem somewhat facile, especially since he does seem to take various kinds of actions enabling or facilitating the pursuit of an end in other ways to count as instances of 'promoting' that end.

⁴¹⁶ On these 'negative' and 'positive' concepts of freedom, see *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 13, 6:213-4.

⁴¹⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 14, 6:221.

⁴¹⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 14, 6:221.

will⁴¹⁹ in its legislative role as "practical reason itself."⁴²⁰ When one engages in exclusively moral persuasion, then, that is, in persuasion which is effective upon the person so persuaded only by way of convincing them that it is in fact their duty to do that to which they are thereby persuaded, without appeal to any incentive other than this, one's role is not that of contributing causally to that which they are thereby persuaded to do. Rather, it seems, one is providing their practical reason, by way of one's argument, with an opportunity to grasp the independently apparent moral necessity of this action, and, thereby, should this succeed, providing their choice,⁴²¹ or will in its executive role, with the opportunity to act as this moral necessity demands. If this is the case, though, then it would seem that one's role in such a case, as in those above, is again one only of enabling or facilitating the action of the person so persuaded, rather than being a causal one.

And, if this is the case, then we would seem to face something of a puzzle with respect to our seemingly plausible contention above, that when one acts in this way to enable or facilitate the action of another, one's action can be said to 'promote' that action on their part, and its corresponding end or aim, only to the extent that they do themselves in some way mean to attempt or undertake that action, or pursue that end or aim. The immediately relevant action on the other's part, here, would seem to be the 'inner action' of making their own perfection their end, of taking up or committing to this perfection as

⁴¹⁹ *Wille*

⁴²⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 13, 6:213.

⁴²¹ *Willkür*

an end of theirs. Only by promoting this action on their part, it would seem, can I promote the other's perfection in such a case. But, by hypothesis, this is not an action which they in any way antecedently mean, at least consciously or explicitly, to undertake. They are convinced to undertake the action, in this case, only to the extent that they come to realize, as they had not before, that it is either an instance of or implied by a type of action, or an end, to which they were already, to at least some extent, committed: a case of doing their duty. It would seem, however, that if Kant is to take it, as we have argued above that he clearly does, that many of us frequently fail to have those ends which it is our duty to have, despite, in at least many, if not all cases, having it among our ends to do our duty,⁴²² then the mere fact of our having an end which, properly understood, would imply our having another end or aim as well, cannot be enough to make it the case that we can also be said, in the relevant sense, to have that second end or aim. When I set out to provide another with a rational argument for making their own perfection their end, then, it seems that I may very well mean, in doing so, to promote their perfection by so doing. But, insofar as they do not yet, themselves, have the promotion of their own perfection in any way among their own ends or aims, to the extent that I am, by so doing, enabling an action of theirs which they antecedently meant in some way to attempt or undertake, that action is one of doing their duty, not of promoting their perfection.

⁴²² Although Kant has argued that we are all, inevitably, by our nature as human beings, moved or motivated by the thought of duty, or the law, it does not seem that we should infer, from this, that we all have it among our ends that we should do our duty. Rather, since he has argued that something can only be an end of ours if we have freely chosen to make it one, it seems that, in order for it to be our end that we should do our duty we must in some way freely choose that this should be the case, and so, that this will involve, at the very least, some sort of endorsement, on our part, of our pre-existing moral tendencies.

What action, then, should we say that it is I have taken, in enabling or facilitating this action on their part? Depending upon our own intuitions here,⁴²³ we may wish, already, to say that my action here is not yet to be seen as one of promoting the other's perfection, although it may well be my 'wish' or hope to do so, thereby. Rather, we may wish to say, whatever the outcome, that because the action which the other takes in the case of my success is one to which they are moved by conceiving of it as a service to or instance of their end or aim of doing their duty, and not as an action which furthers their perfection (although it does do this), my action of enabling or facilitating this action on their part is an action of promoting their doing their duty, but not, yet, of promoting their perfection. That is, we may wish to say that, because my action here can be only enabling or facilitating of theirs, rather than causally operative, and is therefore best described in terms of the action on their part which it enables or facilitates, and the nature of their action is most appropriately characterized in terms of their ends and incentives in so acting, rather than by mine, their having their own perfection among their ends or aims is indeed a prerequisite for any ability on my part to promote that perfection by my action. What I am able to do, then, in the case where they do not yet themselves have their own perfection among their chosen ends or aims, is only to take an action which may help to put into place a prerequisite for my taking actions to promote their perfection in the future, not one which can be said, directly, to be one of promoting their perfection, yet. And this is not just because 'only the other himself' can set his own ends, but also

⁴²³ Though many, of course, will not share such intuitions, and to them I may need to offer a different explanation, to make my case seem plausible.

because, in this case, the choice on his part to take up the end must be made irrespective of any incentive other than duty itself if it is not to be self-undermining, and it is therefore impossible, in principle, for anyone to move him to do so in any causal way.

Since it is impossible, in principle, then, for me to promote the perfection of another unless they themselves have taken up this end, and not all people will have taken up this end, I can not have a duty to promote the perfection of others, in general, as I do to promote their happiness. Since such a duty would require us to do the impossible, in principle, in the case of many others, and many of us will be in no position to know, with respect to any of the others with whom we may interact, whether they are among these others or not, many of us will never be in a position to know whether it is possible for us to act in this way. If, as seems plausible, then, we cannot have a duty to act in a way which we cannot know to be possible for us, then many of us cannot have such a duty. And if many of us cannot have such a duty, then it cannot be a duty which all human beings, as moral beings, have. And, if this is so, then the perfection of others cannot be an end which is also a duty. In order to promote the perfection of another in the case where they have not yet taken up their own perfection as one of their ends, to put the point above in another way, I would have to be able to causally contribute to their taking up an end simply because it was their duty to do so, and this is something that can only be done by their own practical reason. It cannot be my duty to *promote* another's perfection in such a case, then, even if I may have their perfection as an end of mine, in the weak

sense of a 'mere wish,' because 'it is self-contradictory to require that I do (make it my duty to do) something that only the other himself can do.'

XV. 'Moral' Friendship

Where, then, if this is enough, for now, to satisfy our worry about the possibility of a duty to another's perfection, does this leave us? Where has all of this led, with respect to our picture of Kant's account of friendship, overall? If it is plausible, as we have argued, that the 'perfect' friends do have a duty to promote one another's moral perfection, as a part of their friendship, to the extent that each of the friends has their own moral perfection among their own ends, and that this is a 'duty of love,' insofar as the friends are obligated in this way in virtue of their 'pragmatic' commitment to one another's happiness or well-being, and so, to one another's ends, but one which is made possible for them by the insight into one another's ends and deliberative processes provided through the total trust and confidence they share as 'moral' friends, then it follows that Kant's 'perfect' friendship will be one which shares the features of both his 'pragmatic' and his 'moral' friendships. And, if this is the case, then it cannot be that his 'moral' friendship is called 'moral' because it is the closest we can ever come, in practice, to the 'perfect' friendship after which he has argued that we have a duty to strive. Rather, it will be the case that any, even perfectly realized, 'merely moral' friendship could still, in practice, and not just in principle, come closer to the ideal of Kant's 'perfect' friendship through the introduction of 'pragmatic' concern by the friends for one another's well-being or happiness. Why, then, we might ask again, as we did initially, does Kant choose

to call this sort of friendship a 'moral' one? The simplest and most straightforward answer to this that emerges from what we have said may be that which began to take shape in our discussion of the shared features of 'pragmatic' and 'perfect' friendship above, that is, that both of these friendships, already just in virtue of their shared element of concern by the friends for one another's well-being or happiness, even without the further reasons for which this may also be the case in 'perfect' friendship, are of a type which is 'an ideal of one's wishes, which knows no bounds in its rational concept but which must always be very limited in experience.' That is, quite plausibly, as we have argued, although there may be many friendships which in practice do come closer to the ideal of Kant's 'perfect' friendship than a 'merely moral' friendship does, none of these friendships will be of a type which is itself in practice perfectible. Insofar as this type of friendship is the closest one can come to that 'perfect' friendship after which we have a duty to strive, then, which admits of 'a precisely determinant maxim' to assure us of what it is that we must do, it makes a kind of sense to call this sort of friendship 'moral.'

Though it is not the type of friendship which comes closest in practice to perfection, it is the type of friendship which comes closest to this ideal while itself also remaining perfectible, the type of friendship which comes closest in practice to 'perfect' friendship, that is, while remaining of a type which can itself still be 'perfectly' achieved.

But, there is, I think, a more interesting answer to this which emerges from the rest of our discussion above, and one which begins to answer the larger question of why Kant would think to conclude the entirety of his Elements of Ethics with these odd and

seemingly tangential little sections on friendship. Recall that these sections are titled "On the Most Intimate Union of Love with Respect in **Friendship**,"⁴²⁴ and this seems, at first, obviously to refer to the balance of 'love' and 'respect' within 'perfect' friendship, as Kant has initially discussed it. But, given all that we have said, we can see an additional dimension of this emerge in the way that he has structured the section. Recall, for a moment, the passage we have mentioned in passing above, in which Kant discusses the division of the duties of virtue to oneself into those which one owes to oneself 'both as an **animal** (natural) and a moral being' and those which one owes to oneself 'as a moral being only (without taking his animality into consideration).' Though this is the primary 'subjective' division by which he orders his discussion of the duties of virtue to oneself, that between those duties which we owe to ourselves considered only insofar as we are 'moral' beings and those duties which we owe to ourselves considered also in our 'animal' nature, he does not appear to deploy it again in his division of the duties of virtue to others. Where in discussion of our duties to ourselves he gives us chapters on "A Human Being's Duty to Himself as an Animal Being"⁴²⁵ and "A Human Being's Duty to Himself Merely as a Moral Being,"⁴²⁶ in his discussion of our duties to others he gives us, instead, a unified chapter "On Duties to Others Merely as Human Beings"⁴²⁷ on the whole.⁴²⁸ The

⁴²⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 215, 6:469.

⁴²⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 176, 6:421.

⁴²⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 182, 6:428.

⁴²⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 198, 6:448.

⁴²⁸ As opposed, that is, to our duties towards them not just as fellow human beings, but also "With Regard to Their **Condition**" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 214, 6:468).

main sections sub-dividing this chapter, moreover, do not seem to track this previous division of respects in which a human being might be considered as the one to whom duties are owed. Rather, we are given the familiar division, here, into a section "On the Duty of Love to Other Human Beings"⁴²⁹ and a section "On Duties of Virtue towards Other Human Beings Arising from the **Respect** Due Them."⁴³⁰ If we recall a bit more closely how this division between the duties of love and the duties of respect to others has been drawn, however, we can see that there is a parallel between this way of dividing our duties to others and the way in which Kant has divided our duties to ourselves.

Although the 'feelings' of 'love' and 'respect' do, Kant argues, "accompany the carrying out of these duties,"⁴³¹ the duties of 'love' and 'respect' are not, at least directly, on his view, duties *to* 'love' and 'respect,' in the sense of these 'feelings.' Rather, he maintains, they must be duties to adopt certain maxims with respect to other human beings, which maxims he refers to, respectively,⁴³² as '*benevolence* (practical love)' and 'respect in the practical sense.' "In this context... **love** is not to be understood as feeling..."⁴³³ he tells us,

It must rather be thought as the maxim of *benevolence* (practical love), which results in beneficence. The same holds true of the **respect** to be shown to others. It is not to be understood as the mere *feeling* that comes from comparing our own *worth* with another's (such as a child feels merely from habit toward his parents, a pupil toward his teacher...). It is rather to be understood as

⁴²⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 198, 6:448.

⁴³⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 209, 6:462.

⁴³¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 198, 6:448.

⁴³² If somewhat unevenly.

⁴³³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 199, 6:449.

the *maxim* of limiting our self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in another person, and so as respect in the practical sense (*observantia aliis praestanda*).⁴³⁴

And our duties to these maxims of 'practical love' and 'respect in the practical sense' towards others are ones which he argues that we have, at least in part, by appealing to the similar maxims which he takes it that we either do, unavoidably, have or should, by duty, have with respect to ourselves. In the case of our duty of 'practical love',⁴³⁵ he argues that

[t]he reason that it is a duty to be beneficent is this: since our self-love cannot be separated from our need to be loved (helped in case of need) by others as well, we therefore make ourselves an end for others; and the only way this maxim can be binding is through its qualification as a universal law, hence through our will to make others our ends as well. The happiness of others is therefore an end that is also a duty.⁴³⁶

That is, it seems, Kant takes it that, regardless of whether we have any 'feeling' of love for ourselves or not, we do, unavoidably, by our nature as the sort of beings we are, take an interest in our own well-being and chosen ends. It is markedly impossible, in fact, for us not to take an interest in our own ends, whatever these may be, since this is simply part of what it means to have an end. And to the extent that we are also, by our nature, unavoidably vulnerable and, to at least some extent, social, creatures, we will, he seems to think, unavoidably find ourselves in circumstances where our ends or well-being cannot be secured without the help of others. To the extent that, in willing the ends, then,

⁴³⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 199, 6:449.

⁴³⁵ Though here he is, strictly speaking, discussing *beneficence*, which he elsewhere seems to take to be downstream of benevolence, in the application of the maxim to action. What he has to say about the relationship between these two in *The Metaphysics of Morals* is complicated, sometimes appearing contradictory, and deserves further attention. For present purposes, however, it seems reasonable to take the argument he gives here to be meant to support, at least broadly, our duty of benevolence as 'practical love' as well.

⁴³⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 155-6, 6:393.

Compare this with the argument given on p. 200, 6:450-1, part of which is excerpted below, in which it is simply asserted that "I want everyone else to be benevolent toward me," and the question of *why* I want this, or why such a 'want' should ground a duty, is suppressed.

as we unavoidably do, we must also will the necessary means, he seems to think, we must also, just as unavoidably, will that others should help us under such circumstances.⁴³⁷

And we are permitted to will this, he seems to take it, only if we will it universally, that is, if we will not only that others should help us in the case of such need, but that all human beings should help any others in the case of such need, and so, that we, too, should help any other human being in the case of such need on their part. As he puts it later on, in giving another version of this argument in his section "On the Duty of Love in Particular:"⁴³⁸

lawgiving reason, which includes the whole species (and so myself as well) in its idea of humanity as such, includes me as giving universal law along with all others in the duty of mutual benevolence, in accordance with the principle of equality, and *permits* you to be benevolent to yourself on the condition of your being benevolent to every other as well; for it is only in this way that your maxim (of beneficence) qualifies for a giving of universal law....⁴³⁹

Whatever we might think of this argument itself, then, it is one to which Kant centrally appeals in his attempts to establish the happiness of others as an end that is also a duty, that is, our 'duty of love.' And in doing so, it seems, he makes two things clear which are particularly relevant to our current concern: firstly, that our duty of love to others is in some sense a consequence of the unavoidability of our self-love, where the 'love,' in both cases, is his 'practical love,' that is, a 'love' which we might reasonably gloss, for present purposes, as something more like 'interest,'⁴⁴⁰ and so, that our duty to take an interest in

⁴³⁷ Though, it seems that this 'will' can be only a 'wish' in most cases.

⁴³⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 199, 6:450.

⁴³⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 200, 6:451.

⁴⁴⁰ Though it does seem to have more shades of meaning than just this, in some of the contexts in which he deploys it, and this deserves further exploration.

the well-being or ends of others, by this argument, is a consequence of the unavoidability of our taking an interest in our own well-being or ends. And, secondly, that this connection, between the unavoidability of our having a maxim of such interest in our own well-being or ends, and our duty to take up a maxim of interest in the well-being or ends of others, is one which he seems to take to hold only because we are considering ourselves, here, 'both as an **animal** (natural) and a moral being,' that is, that the link between the fact of our first maxim and our duty to the second relies upon an understanding of our own (and others') animal nature and vulnerability to need. Because our maxim of self-love, however, is an unavoidable one, there is no direct analogy here between our duty to others and our duty to ourselves. As Kant makes explicit in giving the second version of this argument we mentioned above, "[t]his does not mean that I am thereby under obligation to love myself (for this happens unavoidably, apart from any command, so there is no obligation to it)."⁴⁴¹

In the case of 'respect in the practical sense,' on the other hand, the parallel between our duty to ourselves and our duty to others is more direct. In this case, it seems, we have a duty to take up the maxim of respect for others for just the same reason that we have such a duty with respect to ourselves. In both cases, that is, the duty of 'respect in the practical sense' for others and the duty of 'self-esteem' for ourselves, Kant argues that the relevant maxim is required of us as a recognition of the 'dignity' possessed by all human beings as moral beings, endowed, as such, with freedom and, thus,

⁴⁴¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 200, 6:451.

'personality,' and a "worth that has no price."⁴⁴² In the case of our duty of respect for others he argues, explicitly, not just that this is a reciprocal duty, owed equally by all human beings to one another, but, also, that it corresponds directly in our relations with others to our duty of self-esteem in relation to ourselves:

Every human being has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow human beings and is *in turn* bound to respect every other. Humanity itself is a dignity, for a human being cannot be used merely as a means by any human being, (either by others or even by himself) but must always be used at the same time as an end. ... But just as he cannot give himself away for any price (this would conflict with his duty of self-esteem), so neither can he act contrary to the equally necessary self-esteem of others, as human beings, that is, he is under obligation to acknowledge, in a practical way, the dignity of humanity in every other human being.⁴⁴³

And though Kant does, as we have seen, at times use 'humanity' somewhat ambiguously, to refer not just to our nature as moral beings, in contrast to our 'animality,' but also, it seems, to our entire nature, as animal beings who are also moral ones, that he means it here to refer to our nature as moral beings in particular is clear not just from the immediate context, but from what he has to say about our above mentioned duty of 'self-esteem' elsewhere. In the section dedicated to "Servility,"⁴⁴⁴ as a vice opposed to this required 'self-esteem' on our part, he directly contrasts the 'dignity' possessed by every human being considered as a moral being with our merely relative and pragmatic value as a, more or less talented or capable, member of our animal species, and grounds the respect due to all human beings soundly in the former. "In the system of nature," he argues, here, "a human being (*homo phaenomenon, animal rationale*) is a being of slight importance and shares with the rest of the animals, as offspring of the earth, an ordinary

⁴⁴² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 209, 6:462.

⁴⁴³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 209, 6:462.

⁴⁴⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186, 6:434.

value...."⁴⁴⁵ Considered as a moral being, however, as a 'person,' subject to rational laws, that is, as Kant goes on to say here, in terms of his 'humanity,' a human being possesses 'dignity' beyond all 'ordinary value' of the sort which can be possessed by animals or 'things':

[A] human being regarded as a *person*, that is, as the subject of a morally practical reason, is exalted above any price; for as a person (*homo noumenon*), he is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in himself, that is, he possesses a *dignity* (an absolute inner worth) by which he exacts *respect* for himself from all other rational beings in the world.⁴⁴⁶

And it is in virtue of this dignity, as a moral being, that a human being is not only licensed, Kant argues, but required, to demand this respect from others, and even from himself, regardless of how little he may sometimes feel that he deserves it:

Humanity in his person is the object of the respect which he can demand from every other human being, but which he must also not forfeit. Hence he can and should value himself by a low as well as by a high standard, depending on whether he views himself as a sensible being (in terms of his animal nature) or as an intelligible being (in terms of his moral predisposition). ... his insignificance as a *human animal* may not infringe upon his consciousness of his dignity as a *rational human being*, and he should not disavow the moral self-esteem of such a being,.... this *self-esteem* is a duty of man to himself.⁴⁴⁷

It is a duty to himself, moreover, which Kant has arrayed very clearly, here, under those duties which he owes to himself 'merely as a moral being,' or, as he has glossed it a few pages earlier, "to himself regarded merely as a moral being (the humanity in his own person)."⁴⁴⁸

It seems reasonable to think, then, on the basis of all of this, that Kant's 'duties of love' can be safely interpreted as duties which we owe to others, rather than ourselves,

⁴⁴⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186, 6:434.

⁴⁴⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186, 6:434-5.

⁴⁴⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186-7, 6:435.

⁴⁴⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 182, 6:429.

considered both as animal and moral beings, while his 'duties of respect' are those which we owe to them considered as moral beings only. Frustratingly, however, Kant is not clear, in his sections addressing our duties to ourselves, how this 'subjective' division of our duties to ourselves is meant to apply across the 'objective' division of these duties which he draws in terms of "what is **formal** and what is **material** in duties to oneself."⁴⁴⁹ He explicitly applies this division between what we owe to ourselves considered only as moral beings and what we owe to ourselves considered both as moral and animal beings only to the 'formal' side of this 'objective' division while outlining these divisions in the introduction to his discussion of our duties to ourselves,⁴⁵⁰ and does not explicitly mention this 'subjective' division again in the sections discussing those duties which fall on the 'material' side. Given the way that he titles these sections, however, "On a Human Being's Duty to Himself to Develop and Increase His Natural Perfection, That Is, for a Pragmatic Purpose"⁴⁵¹ and "On a Human Being's Duty to Himself to Increase His **Moral**

⁴⁴⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

⁴⁵⁰ The way that he does this, moreover, in the case of the duties to oneself considered only as a moral being, might seem to suggest that we have such duties *only* with respect to what is 'formal' in our duties to ourselves: "But a human being's duty to himself as a moral being *only* (without taking his animality into consideration) consists in what is *formal* in the consistency of the maxims of his will with the *dignity* of humanity in his person. It consists, therefore, in a prohibition against depriving himself of the *prerogative* of a moral being, that of acting in accordance with principles, that is, inner freedom, and so making himself a plaything of the mere inclinations and hence a thing" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 175, 6:420). This appearance is undercut, somewhat, however, by the fact that he *also* applies the category of those duties which we owe to ourselves considered both as moral and animal beings only to this 'formal' side of his 'objective' division here, where, if it were the case that all duties to ourselves considered only as moral beings were to do with what was 'formal,' rather than 'material,' in our duties to ourselves, we would expect that all of our duties to ourselves falling on the 'material' side of this division would be ones which were owed to ourselves both as animal and moral beings. This gives the overall impression that, instead of making a claim here, with respect to how this 'subjective' division applies across the 'objective' one, he has simply left consideration of how this division applies to our duties to ourselves considered in terms of what is 'material' in them out of the discussion.

⁴⁵¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 194, 6:444.

Perfection, That Is, for a Moral Purpose Only,"⁴⁵² along with everything else that we have seen him say about our duty to our own perfection, it seems most natural, in the absence of good reasons to think otherwise, to read our duty to our 'natural perfection' as among those duties which we owe to ourselves considered 'both as an animal (natural) and a moral being,' and our duty to our 'moral perfection' as among those which we owe to ourselves 'as a moral being only.' And if we are confident enough to put some weight upon his use of 'humanity,' here, as referring to our nature as a 'moral' being in contrast to an 'animal' one, we might find some further support for this reading, in the case of our 'moral perfection,' in his description of this duty as a duty 'to oneself regarding the end of humanity in our own person,' and, perhaps, "as having to do with one's entire moral end."⁴⁵³

And if all of this seems plausible to us, as a reading of how Kant sees these different duties aligning in terms of what we owe to (and want for) ourselves and others considered in these different respects, either as both moral and animal beings, or as moral beings only, then this provides us with another plausible answer as to why he might have chosen to call his 'moral friendship' 'moral.' It may be, that is, that if, as we have argued above may well be the case, Kant is interested in these two types of friendship, 'pragmatic' and 'moral,' largely or primarily in terms of their respective contributions towards the 'perfect' friendship which he has argued that we have a duty to pursue, he has

⁴⁵² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

⁴⁵³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

called this type of friendship a 'moral' one precisely because it is this sort of friendship, with the insight it can provide us into one another's deliberative processes and chosen ends, which makes it possible, within such a 'perfect' friendship, for us to positively benefit our friends considered as 'moral' beings, and to benefit from them, in turn, in this same way, by aiding them, as they aid us, in pursuing moral perfection. And, perhaps, also because, insofar as it is this type of friendship which can make it possible for us to aid our friends in pursuing their end of moral perfection in this way, it is this type of friendship which can make it possible for us to help them in pursuing their own moral ends, understood not just as some ends among those which they happen to have chosen, but specifically as moral ones.⁴⁵⁴

And, if this is the case, then the initially puzzling introduction of 'pragmatic' friendship as the obvious contrast, or, perhaps, complement, to 'merely moral' friendship begins to make a somewhat clearer, or at least a different sort of, sense as well, as does the otherwise seemingly haphazard structure of the discussion of friendship overall. We have just seen Kant use this same language, of the 'pragmatic' in contrast to the 'moral,' in the titles of his sections on our duties to our own 'natural' and 'moral' perfection, respectively. That is, more specifically, we have seen him draw an implicit contrast,

⁴⁵⁴ I realize I am making some assumptions here which I haven't in fact earned, but the thought is, very roughly, something like this: while we may, in the case of a stranger, help them to achieve some end which they happen to have for moral reasons, in doing so we treat this end as we would any other of their discretionary chosen ends. That a given end of theirs is or isn't, in reality, a 'moral' one for them isn't relevant to our promotion of that end, or the ways in which we are able to promote it. In the case of our friend, however, in the interest of whose moral perfection we are permitted to act, to the extent that we know them to have this moral perfection among their own ends, whether or not some particular end of theirs is a 'moral' one is no longer an indifferent matter in our promotion of it.

there, between 'a pragmatic purpose' and 'a moral purpose only,' where the first, it would seem, is a matter of our natural or discretionary chosen ends, while the second is a matter of those ends which we have a duty to choose. Similarly, a 'pragmatic' friendship, taken alone, as a friendship which 'burdens itself with the ends of others,' but without the additional ability to aid the friend in pursuing the end of his own moral perfection provided by the presence of a 'moral' friendship as well,⁴⁵⁵ will be one in which the friends take up one another's natural or discretionary chosen ends⁴⁵⁶ as their own, and benefit each other, or each other's happiness, in respect of these ends, and, to that extent, considered both as animal (natural) and moral beings.

Conclusion: Friendship and Virtue

And if all of this is right, or at least convincingly plausible, then it seems as though we have arrived at an answer as to why Kant might have chosen these sections 'On the Most Intimate Union of Love with Respect in Friendship' as the conclusion of the entirety of his Elements of Ethics. The purpose of the Elements of Ethics, after all, is to lay out the 'elements' of The Doctrine of Virtue,⁴⁵⁷ where Kant is using 'ethics' and 'virtue' largely interchangeably here. As he tells it, in the Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue,

In ancient times "ethics" signified the *doctrine of morals (philosophia moralis)* in general which was also called the *doctrine of duties*. Later on it seemed better to reserve the name "ethics" for one part of moral philosophy, namely for the doctrine of those duties that do not come under

⁴⁵⁵ Or, that is, a sufficiently well-realized one, since not every friendship of the 'moral' type will come close enough to the perfect case of this type to provide us with this benefit.

⁴⁵⁶ Or, at least, chosen ends treated as discretionary, without regard to whether the friend has chosen these ends because it is their duty to do so or not; see note 454 above.

⁴⁵⁷ That is, it seems, the *content* of this doctrine, rather than the pragmatics of learning and implementing it, as in the Methods of Ethics.

external laws (it was thought appropriate to call this, in German, the *doctrine of virtue*). Accordingly, the system of the doctrine of duties in general is now divided into the system of the *doctrine of right (ius)*, which deals with the duties that can be given by external laws, and the system of the *doctrine of virtue (ethica)*, which treats of duties that cannot be so given; and this division may stand.⁴⁵⁸

The picture is, of course, as always, somewhat more complicated than this. Because it is not possible to give an external law for the internal determination of the will, Kant argues, but only for external actions, that we should do that which is our duty *from* duty is a command that can belong only to ethics. Thus "ethical lawgiving, while it also makes internal actions duties, does not exclude external actions but applies to everything that is a duty in general"⁴⁵⁹ and "[i]t can be seen from this that all duties, just because they are duties, belong to ethics."⁴⁶⁰ Similarly, "[s]ince the moral capacity to constrain oneself can be called virtue, action springing from such a disposition (respect for the law) can be called virtuous (ethical) action, even though the law lays down a duty of right,"⁴⁶¹ and The Doctrine of Virtue does, to some extent, particularly in the introduction, discuss virtue in this broader sense. But, Kant argues, "respect for law as such does not yet establish an end as a duty, and only such an end is a duty of virtue."⁴⁶² Although, that is, it seems, all duties, including duties of right, are duties to which we are, to the extent that they are duties, ethically bound, and so when we fulfill them because it is our duty to do so we are acting virtuously, only those duties which concern an end which it is a duty to

⁴⁵⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 145, 6:379.

⁴⁵⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 21, 6:219.

⁴⁶⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 21, 6:219.

⁴⁶¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 157, 6:394.

⁴⁶² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 168, 6:410.

have will be duties of virtue. And this, he seems to take it, is another way of understanding why it is that no external lawgiving will be possible for duties of virtue: "[d]uties of virtue cannot be subject to external lawgiving simply because they have to do with an end which (or the having of which) is also a duty,"⁴⁶³ and "no external lawgiving can bring about someone's setting an end for himself..."⁴⁶⁴ So, he argues "what it is virtuous to do is not necessarily a *duty of virtue*. What it is virtuous to do may concern only *what is formal* in maxims of actions, whereas a duty of virtue has to do with their matter, that is to say, with an end that is thought as also a duty."⁴⁶⁵ So, he argues, "there is only *one* obligation of virtue, whereas there are *many* duties of virtue; for there are indeed many objects that it is also our duty to have as ends, but there is only one virtuous disposition,"⁴⁶⁶ and "[h]ence all the *divisions* of ethics will have to do only with duties of virtue."⁴⁶⁷ The Elements of Ethics, then, it seems that we should take it, is meant to be devoted specifically to the duties of virtue in this narrower sense: those duties involving 'an end which (or the having of which) is also a duty.'

And, we have already seen Kant say, prominently, that there are two such ends: '*one's own perfection and the happiness of others.*' But, his claim above, echoed also elsewhere, that 'there are indeed many objects that it is also our duty to have as ends,' combined with his apparent suggestion that it is their characteristic ends which

⁴⁶³ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 31, 6:239.

⁴⁶⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 31, 6:239.

⁴⁶⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 157, 6:394-5.

⁴⁶⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 168, 6:410.

⁴⁶⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 168, 6:410.

individuate virtues,⁴⁶⁸ of which there are, presumably, more than two,⁴⁶⁹ would seem to suggest that the ends which it is our duty to have might be enumerated differently at different levels of description. And in at least two places in *The Doctrine of Virtue* he offers us a tantalizing suggestion that, at a certain level of description, at least, there may be only one:

The supreme principle of the doctrine of virtue is: act in accordance with a maxim of *ends* that it can be a universal law for everyone to have. – In accordance with this principle a human being is an end for himself as well as for others, and it is not enough that he is not authorized to use either himself or others merely as means (since he could then still be indifferent to them); it is in itself his duty to make man as such his end.⁴⁷⁰

Or, as he puts it in discussing the "Division of the Doctrine of Virtue,"⁴⁷¹ we must

...in terms of what is *material*, present the doctrine of virtue not merely as a doctrine of duties generally but also as a *doctrine of ends*, so that a human being is under obligation to regard himself, as well as every other human being, as his end.⁴⁷²

These passages seem to suggest, then, that the 'matter' of duty, the 'ends' with which the duties of virtue, and so 'all the *divisions* of ethics' will have to do, is ultimately only one thing, variously understood, that is, human beings, whether ourselves or others.⁴⁷³ And, if we read the *Elements of Ethics* in this way, then many things begin to slot into place.

If we recall Kant's discussion of our maxim of 'self-love' and duty to the happiness of

⁴⁶⁸ This suggestion is perhaps more clear elsewhere than it is in the passage above, as when he claims that "[t]o think of several virtues (as one unavoidably does) is nothing other than to think of the various moral objects to which the will is led by the one principle of virtue, and so too with regard to the contrary vices" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p.165, 6:406).

⁴⁶⁹ As we have seen him say above, 'a multitude.'

⁴⁷⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 157, 6:395.

⁴⁷¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 167, 6:410.

⁴⁷² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 168, 6:410.

⁴⁷³ Although he does also argue that "[t]he highest unconditional end of pure practical reason (which is still a duty) consists in this: that virtue be its own end and, despite the benefits it confers on human beings, also its own reward" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 158, 6:396). And, as is the case in general with regard to the various ways he describes the ends which it is our duty to have, at no point does it become fully clear how he sees all of these various descriptions fitting together.

others, above, we can see that he seems to argue there as though making someone's *happiness* one's end and making that individual *themselves* one's end are actions that can be mutually inferred from one another. In wishing that others should help us in the case of need, he argues, we thereby wish to 'make ourselves an end for others,' and when it follows from this that we are obligated 'to make others our ends as well,' he takes this to imply that 'the happiness of others is therefore an end that is also a duty.' Likewise, as is more expected, his language surrounding our duty of 'respect' for others, and 'self-esteem' for ourselves, repeatedly invokes our duty to treat 'humanity itself,' in the person of every 'human being,' ourselves or others, 'always... as an end.' It is not immediately clear, however, how the sense in which we could make human beings, either ourselves or others, our 'ends' could be compatible with the sense of an 'end' in which this is 'an object of free choice,' much less, as he puts it elsewhere, "an object of the choice (of a rational being) through the representation of which choice is determined to an action to .. this object about."⁴⁷⁴

If we look somewhat more carefully at what he has to say about such ends, however, we can see that he does not actually seem to intend to restrict this sense of 'end' nearly so narrowly. As he argues in discussing "the Principle on Which the Division of Duties to Oneself Is Based"⁴⁷⁵ these duties will comprise both negative and positive ones, where the "[n]egative duties *forbid* a human being to act contrary to the **end** of his nature,

⁴⁷⁴ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 146, 6:381.

⁴⁷⁵ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:418.

and so have to do merely with his moral self-preservation..."⁴⁷⁶ while the "positive duties, which *command* him to make a certain object of choice his end, concern his *perfecting* of himself."⁴⁷⁷ Both of these types of duties, however, must be to do with ends which it is a duty to take up or have, and so, with ends which are chosen, or, in his language, the objects of choice, since he emphasizes that "[b]oth of them belong to virtue, either as duties of omission (*sustine et abstine*) or as duties of commission (*viribus concessis utere*), but both belong to it as duties of virtue,"⁴⁷⁸ that is, as he has repeatedly made clear, as duties which 'have to do with an end which (or the having of which) is also a duty.' The distinction here, then, it seems we can take it, is not between duties which do and do not have to do with an end which it is our duty to have but, rather, between duties which involve the initial act of adopting the required end, subsequent actions to 'bring this object about,' or, it seems, perhaps, to actively sustain or maintain it, and duties which, instead, involve only the preservation of the object which is such an end of ours, to whatever extent it may already have been brought about (whether through our own agency or not), through abstention from those actions that would be destructive to it or contrary to its promotion on our part, or the avoidance of acts on our part which might militate against its being brought about in cases where this has not yet happened at all. It will not be the case, then, that such an 'object of the choice' must be one which we can act to 'bring... about,' strictly speaking. It seems, rather, that the crucial feature being

⁴⁷⁶ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

⁴⁷⁷ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

⁴⁷⁸ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 174, 6:419.

emphasized is that our 'representation' of such an end must be one which is, at least potentially, action guiding for us, not that the relevant action must be of any particular sort. And, if we are to take his talk of the maxims of 'love' and 'respect' as ones which reflect our adoption of other human beings as our ends at face value, it seems he has offered us many examples of how he takes this end to be one which can be action guiding, if not, perhaps, clarification as to the details of how he understands this process.

We can see a suggestion, however, in his discussion of our duties to our own perfection, both natural and moral, that he is understanding our making ourselves our end in a way that is at least loosely teleological: what it is for us to make ourselves our end, it seems, is for us to make it our end that we should realize, to the extent that we are capable, the ideal or perfection of our own nature as human beings. And if this is so, it seems, then it would explain his tendency to shift, rather haphazardly, between speaking of the relevant required end of duty as being that of 'human beings' and as being, instead, that of 'humanity.' As he argues in discussing our duty to our own 'natural perfection,'

A human being has a duty to himself to cultivate his natural powers (powers of spirit, mind, and body), as means to all sorts of possible ends. – He owes it to himself (as a rational being) not to leave idle and, as it were, rusting away the natural predispositions and capacities that his reason can someday use. ... as a being capable of ends (of making objects his ends) he must owe the use of his powers not merely to natural instinct but rather to the freedom by which he determines their scope. Hence the basis on which he should develop his capacities (for all sorts of ends) is not regard for the *advantages* that their cultivation can provide;.... Instead, it is a command of morally practical reason and a *duty* of a human being to himself to cultivate his capacities (some among them more than others, insofar as people have different ends), and to be in a pragmatic respect a human being equal to the end of his existence.⁴⁷⁹

Or, as he has put the point much more succinctly, though somewhat more confusingly, in the Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue,

⁴⁷⁹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 194, 6:444-5.

[*n*]atural perfection is the *cultivation* of any *capacities* whatever for furthering ends set forth by reason.The capacity to set oneself an end – any end whatsoever – is what characterizes humanity (as distinguished from animality). Hence there is also bound up with the end of humanity in our own person the rational will, and so the duty, to make ourselves worthy of humanity by culture in general, by procuring or promoting the *capacity* to realize all sorts of possible ends, so far as this is to be found in a human being himself.⁴⁸⁰

Moreover, he has spoken elsewhere of 'happiness,' which we can only hope, for present purposes, to be allowed to read as a matter of attaining one's chosen ends, rather than of 'satisfaction with one's state,' given that we have failed to sufficiently address Kant's ambiguity on this point in the present paper, as "what all human beings recognize as their natural end."⁴⁸¹ And this would seem to find a parallel, potentially, in his claim, in discussing our 'moral perfection' that this duty, considered 'objectively,' is a matter of "attaining completely one's moral end with regard to oneself."⁴⁸² One might be inclined, then, in light of this, to suggest reading our duty to make 'human beings,' (or, sometimes, 'humanity') in both ourselves and others our end in the following way: insofar as we conceive of human beings as both animal and moral beings, that is, as free or moral beings, but, ones whose ends can include both those which it is our duty to have and those which we are permitted to choose at our own discretion, on the basis of our natural inclinations or animal needs, that is, as agents, but not in our moral capacity specifically,

⁴⁸⁰ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391-2.

Though, distressingly, he does seem to suggest in one passage, at least, that 'the capacity to set oneself an end' is somehow to be counted among our *merely* natural or animal capacities, rather than as one which we have as a being which is both moral and animal, despite having otherwise consistently treated this capacity as one which we possess in virtue of our freedom: "Although a human being has, in his understanding, something more than they [the rest of the animals], and can set himself ends, even this gives him only an *extrinsic* value for his usefulness...;... that is to say, it gives one man a higher value than another, that is, a *price* as a commodity in exchange with these animals as things...." (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186, 6:434).

⁴⁸¹ *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 154, 6:391.

⁴⁸² *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 196, 6:446.

to make either ourselves or others our end is to make it an end of ours to promote the 'pragmatic' efficacy our own or others' agency. In our own case, this will mean preserving and cultivating our various natural capacities for pursuing and achieving our chosen ends, whatever these may be, and, in the case of others, it will mean assisting them in pursuing and achieving their own ends, that is, making their ends our own. Insofar as we consider human beings exclusively as moral beings, however, that is, as beings whose choice is, ideally, entirely free not just in the 'negative' sense of being undetermined by sensible impulses, but the 'positive' sense of being fully determined exclusively by their own *Wille*, and, so, by the law,⁴⁸³ making human beings our end will mean, to whatever extent this is possible for us, preserving or promoting their ability to determine their own choice in this way. In the case of others in general, then, since we are not in a position to positively influence their capacity to self-legislate in this way without the very serious risk that our attempts to do so will be self-undermining, and impermissible, acting on this end will mean only restricting our own actions so as not to interfere with their ability to self-legislate in this way. It will thus issue in exclusively negative duties: Kant's duties of 'respect.' In our own case, however, promoting this end will mean cultivating virtue in ourselves, and our own 'moral perfection.' And, if what we have argued above is correct, in the very special case of a 'moral' friend who is also a

⁴⁸³ Kant discusses these 'negative' and 'positive' concepts of 'freedom,' though somewhat opaquely, in the Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*: "Human choice, however, is a choice that can indeed be *affected* but not *determined* by impulses and is therefore of itself (apart from an acquired proficiency of reason) not pure but can still be determined to actions by pure will. *Freedom* of choice is this independence from being *determined* by sensible impulses; this is the negative concept of freedom. The positive concept of freedom is that of the ability of pure reason to be of itself practical" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 13, 6:213-14).

'pragmatic' one, to whose ends we have devoted ourselves and to whose own moral aspirations and internal deliberations we are uniquely privy, that is, of a 'perfect' friend, to whatever extent such a thing is possible in practice, it will also mean helping them to cultivate *their* virtue and 'moral perfection,' to the extent that we can confidently do so in their case without thereby compromising their autonomy, that is, it will issue, in their very special case, in positive duties of respect.

Even without accepting this highly speculative reading, however, it seems that we have enough present in the text itself as we have laid it out above to support the view that Kant has structured his Elements of Ethics in much the following way: our duties to ourselves considered as both animal and moral beings broadly parallel our duties of love to others, and our duties to ourselves considered only as moral beings broadly parallel our duties of respect to others, such that the first pair represent those duties which are to do with making ourselves and others considered as both moral and animal beings our ends, and the second pair represent those duties which are to do with making ourselves and others considered only as moral beings our ends.⁴⁸⁴ The 'divisions of ethics' in the Elements of Ethics, have to do, then, as Kant has promised, only with 'duties of virtue' in the narrow sense, that is, with those duties which 'have to do with an end which... is also a duty,' and have been drawn, accordingly, in terms of these ends. Kant's 'perfect' friendship, then, as 'the Most Intimate Union of Love with Respect,' in an 'equal mutual' reciprocal relationship, will be a relationship in which each of these ends which it is a

⁴⁸⁴ In whatever way we wish to interpret what it might mean to make someone our 'end.'

duty to have, and according to which the Elements of Ethics as a whole has been divided, will be simultaneously united and served. Moreover, such a friendship will be the only context, of which we are aware, at least, in which Kant takes it to be possible for each of us to serve each of these ends which it is *our* duty to have in the full range of ways in which they can be served, by allowing us to serve the end of one another's moral well-being, and so, one another's moral being, not only through omission, but through active, positive, aid. It is not incidental, then, that he has described this sort of friendship as 'the union of two persons,' since it is, importantly, in our aspirations as 'persons,' specifically, that is, as free, moral beings, that this sort of relationship uniquely allows us to benefit each other. That his odd little discussion of this sort of relationship should be the conclusion to his entire Elements of Ethics, then, is not so perplexing after all, since we find, in this relationship, the unification of all of these 'elements:' the various 'duties of virtue' united in the 'duty of friendship.'

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