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*Friendship, Altruism  
and Morality*

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Finally, my argument is not meant to deny the fundamental moral truth in the notion that each person's good is as worthy of pursuits as is any other's. For example, in the area of social arrangements it would be wrong to favor a policy which promoted only one's own or one's friends' interests, unless doing so could be vindicated by impersonal criteria, such as, e.g., the considerations that one's own group had in the past been unduly neglected in other comparable policies. The question is only how this truth is to be reflected in the actions and deliberations of an individual moral agent. What I have argued is only that it is not properly reflected by the demand that the agent himself be equally concerned with the fostering of everyone's good.

## IV

# FRIENDSHIP AS A MORAL PHENOMENON

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### I

It is entirely appropriate, as we have seen, that a friend act for the benefit of his friend for his own sake and without apprising himself of other possibilities for his beneficence. Not only is this appropriate but, I will argue in this chapter, it is also morally good. Clearing out of the way the concern with impartiality opens up a realm of moral inquiry which includes the altruistic emotions in general, and friendship as a particular relationship which embodies them. In this chapter I will examine friendship as a moral phenomenon in its own right, and will discuss conceptions of friendship which would deny its moral significance.

Friendship is a largely unfamiliar territory for modern moral philosophy, dominated as it has been by Kantian concerns or with utilitarianism, neither of which is hospitable to particular relationships which are both personally and morally significant. For example, contemporary emphasis on conduct which is morally required of us, or on considerations which we are required to take into account, does not easily allow for a focus on friendship as an arena for morally good, yet not morally obligatory, behavior and sentiments.

Let me begin with two central claims. The first is that, other things being equal, acts of friendship are morally good insofar as they involve acting from regard for another person for his own sake. This does not mean that every altruistic act within a friendship is morally admirable or praiseworthy. Some forms of considerateness towards one's friend, or willingness to help, are such that their absence would constitute a

moral failure, and their presence merely something which is to be expected of a friend. So acts can be morally significant though not morally praiseworthy, and this is what I mean by saying that any action done out of regard for the friend for his own sake is morally good. It is analogous to saying that every dutiful act is morally good although some are such that performing them is only what is to be expected, whereas failure to perform them is blameworthy.

Second, the deeper and stronger the concern for the friend — the stronger the desire and willingness to act on behalf of the friend's good — the greater the degree of moral worth (again, other things being equal). Thus a friendship which involves a very deep and genuine regard for the friend's good is a morally excellent relationship.

The argument that friendship is, or can be, a source of moral excellence begins best with an example of what such a friendship might look like. Kate and Sue are friends. Both are clerical workers in the same large insurance firm. Sue is a quiet, thoughtful and somewhat moody person; Kate is cheery and outgoing.

Sue and Kate enjoy each other's company. They enjoy talking about people they know and events that take place in the office. They appreciate and value qualities they see in each other. Kate feels she learns a lot from Sue.

Kate cares very much for Sue. Sue has a tendency to get depressed quite often. Kate has learned how to make Sue feel better when she is in such moods. Sue is not naturally or readily open about what is bothering her; but Kate has learned how to draw her out when she feels that Sue wants to talk. Sometimes she pushes Sue too hard and is rebuffed by her, in a not especially sensitive way. Kate is hurt by such rebuffs. But more often Sue is glad to have such a good friend to talk to, and is grateful for Kate's concern for her, and for Kate's initiative in getting her to talk. Sometimes Kate can cheer Sue up just by being cheerful herself (as she naturally is anyway), but she often senses when such a mood would not be appropriate.

Kate and Sue are comfortable with each other. They feel able to 'be themselves' with each other, more so than with most other people. They trust each other and do not feel that they need to 'keep up a good front' with one another. The women trust each other with personal matters which they do not usually discuss with their husbands. They know that the other will treat the matter seriously, and will not breach the confidence involved. They know each other well and know how to be helpful to the other in discussing intimate personal matters. They

care deeply for each other, and they know this about each other, though they do not express it to each other explicitly. Each one appreciates the care and concern which she knows the other has for her. This is part of what enables them to be so open with each other — the knowledge that the response will be a caring one, even when it is not directly helpful in a practical sense.

Kate and Sue are willing to go to great lengths to help each other out. They readily do favors for each other — helping shop, picking up something at the cleaners, making excuses and covering for each other at work, taking care of each other's children.

When Kate is troubled about something Sue is concerned too; and vice versa. Sue thinks about how to help Kate out. For example, she helps her to think about how to deal with her horrible boss.

The relationship between Sue and Kate was not always so close. They came to know each other gradually. Their different temperaments kept them from taking to each other immediately. In addition, Kate often felt, and still sometimes feels, shut out by Sue's reserve, and her rebuffs. She was anxious to please Sue, to have Sue like her, and this often made her forget her own desires and needs. In her insecurities in the relationship she would also not be able to focus attention on Sue's own needs, feelings, and situation. In struggling with Sue, and with herself, to reach a deeper level of commitment, she worked through these insecurities. She was thereby enabled to distinguish more clearly Sue's needs and feelings from her own, to overcome tendencies to distort.

I have attempted here to describe a friendship which is both realistic (i.e., not involving saints) and yet which has reached a high degree of moral excellence. I mean to have brought out the following features: the concern, care, sympathy, and the willingness to give of oneself to the friend which goes far beyond what is characteristic and expected of people generally. The caring within a friendship is built up on a basis of knowledge, trust, and intimacy. One understands one's friend's good through knowing him well, much better than one knows non-friends, hence much better and more deeply than one knows their good. One is more sensitive to one's friend's needs and wants than one is to non-friends. In genuine friendship one comes to have a close identification with the good of the other person, an occurrence which is generally much rarer and at a much shallower level with other people.

In addition one gives much of oneself, unselfishly, to one's friend, as part of caring for him. One takes this for granted and does not

typically regard it as a sacrifice; this is because one does care about the friend, and not because one is motivated by self-interest. The level of self-giving is generally much greater, though also of a different nature, than with non-friends. All these aspects of friendship are of great moral worth and significance. I will refer to these aspects generally as 'deep caring and identification with the good of the other.'

The caring in such a friendship ranges over a period of time and involves a commitment into the future. Kate and Sue know that neither one will simply drift away from the other. They will stick by each other. Their caring means that if trouble arises between them, they will try to work it through. Of course they know that, human existence being what it is, there is always a possibility of some kind of breach that would drive them apart. But this possibility is not translated into any actual distancing of themselves from one another, or into self-protection through 'lowering one's expectations.' In fact, each expects the other's care, concern, and commitment to extend into the foreseeable future; this is a source of deep comfort and joy to both of them, though they are seldom aware of it explicitly.

It is not the willing self-giving which is by itself the ground of the moral excellence of friendship, but only the self-giving which takes place within a relationship in which one genuinely understands and knows the other person, and understands one's separateness from him. For under the influence of a romantic passion one might be willing to do all sorts of things for the other person, to sacrifice for him. But this passion, and its associated disposition to act for the sake of the other, might be superficial, though very intense. It is not grounded in a real knowledge and understanding of the other, and of one's relationship to the other, such as exists in the example of Kate and Sue. In such a passion one not only gives of oneself — which is morally meritorious — but one, as it were, gives oneself away. And, as many writers have pointed out, this giving oneself away — failing to retain a clear sense of the other's otherness and of one's own separateness and integrity as a person — can stem not only from romantic passion or infatuation, but can be an integral part of long-standing and stable relationships, and can be a settled tendency within an individual's way of relating to others.<sup>1</sup>

We can say, in summary, that the moral excellence of friendship involves a high level of development and expression of the altruistic emotions of sympathy, concern, and care — a deep caring for and identification with the good of another from whom one knows oneself clearly to be other.

II

Let us consider some conceptions of friendship which would deny its moral significance.

On the first conception, friendship is pictured as a sort of natural process, as something which merely happens to one. In one's life one runs across certain people whom one likes and is drawn to, and some of these people become one's friends. This happens to virtually everyone. There is nothing special about it, rather it is simply a natural part of human life, not a particular achievement or a matter of something which one works at.

Moreover, the course of friendship is largely a matter of the vagaries of our emotions. It is thus not really something over which we have control.

Personal relations cannot be controlled by morality because they cannot be controlled at all. . . . they are not the sort of thing of which it makes sense to speak of making them different. They exist or occur; they are lived, experienced, and they change; but they are not controlled.<sup>2</sup>

Thus friendship cannot be a moral excellence, because it is not the sort of thing on which we exercise moral control and agency.

There are several things deeply wrong with this picture of friendship and of personal relationships generally. Most fundamentally, not everyone does have friends in the same way. People have very different relationships to their friends and treat their friends differently, and some of these differences are morally significant. In particular the levels of caring for and giving of oneself to one's friends are very different among different people (and within the same person's friendships).

I might have a genuine friend, someone whom I genuinely like to be with and to do certain kinds of things with, yet I might not care for and about him very deeply. I wish him well, hope for good things for him, and am willing to do some things for him, even if they inconvenience me to some extent. But I do not give much of myself to him. Perhaps I do not even know him very well, and do not make an effort to do so. I do not in any very significant way identify with his goals and aspirations, nor substantially desire his good for its own sake.

There is not necessarily anything wrong with this friendship. Perhaps, even if I could care more about my friend, I do not wish to do so. We understand each other's feelings and neither would want the relationship

to be more than it is. There is nothing blameworthy here.

Nevertheless, this friendship is evidently not at the personal and moral level of Kate and Sue's friendship. It involves much less in the way of caring, of the giving of oneself to the other; of the transcendence of self involved in the deep identification with the other's good; of the level of considerateness, sympathy, and concern involved in Kate and Sue's friendship.

We all, I would think, can recognize that we have friendships at differing levels of commitment, care, and concern. Though all genuine human caring has moral worth and significance, is it not evident that a deeper level of caring involves greater moral worth? Such caring, far from being a natural process, is difficult to achieve, and is not really so common. It involves getting outside oneself, being able to focus clearly on and to know another person. It involves being willing to give of oneself, and in a way which is not simply experienced as self-sacrifice or self-denial. It involves overcoming within oneself obstacles, defenses, or distortions which prevent the deep caring for the other. (And this will generally involve some kind of shared process with the other person.)

Not only are there variations of moral level within one's own friendships; but it is also true that people may vary greatly among themselves in this regard. Some people are generally more caring, giving, helpful, and considerate towards their friends than are others.

### III

Thus some people may have no friendships of a high level of moral excellence. And, as Aristotle recognized, some people may actually be incapable of such friendships. A truly selfish person could not have friends in the fullest sense. If he were genuinely able to care for another person for his own sake, if he were able to give much of himself to the other freely and for his own sake, based on a genuine understanding of him, then he would not be selfish.

It is true that selfish people can be very attached to one or another person, e.g., a spouse or friend. But it seems that such a friendship could not be a friendship of the most morally excellent kind. The attachment or friendship would be too grounded in self-centred considerations. Thus a selfish man could be very attached to his wife, dote on her, and in some ways do a lot for her. But this does not mean that

he really cares for her for her own sake. His behavior would be compatible with his caring for her, so to speak, for her willingness to serve him, to be at his command, to flatter his ego. His giving could be either a minor concession for her serving him or even a further expression or assertion of his power over her and of her dependence on him. If he were truly selfish then something like this would be the most likely explanation of his 'beneficent' behavior. That a person should care very genuinely and fully for only one person while basically being very selfish seems an impossibility.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that a selfish person cannot really have friends at all, in any sense of the term. For first of all there are important aspects of friendship besides caring for the other, i.e., enjoying being with the other person or sharing certain kinds of activities with him, liking the other person. So a selfish man can have friends, in that there are people whom he likes and enjoys sharing certain activities with. Second, even a selfish person can wish another well, be well-disposed towards another. (Here we have to keep in mind the difference between a humanly selfish person and a sociopath.) It is only caring in the full sense which is incompatible with selfishness.<sup>4</sup>

Thus there are very different levels of friendship, levels which are understood in moral terms, in terms of how fully one cares for the other. If this is so then there is something wrong with the conception that friendships happen, so to speak, naturally, without our moral intervention, and that friendships are of a uniform moral type. Friendship always involves a giving of self to the other and a valuing of the other for his own sake. Friendship thus involves an orientation of our (moral) selves towards another person, rather than a process which merely happens to us and which (in Mayo's word) cannot be 'controlled.' On a more general level, personal relations are not merely 'lived' and 'experienced,' nor is their 'change' a merely natural process unrelated to moral aspects of ourselves, as Mayo implies. Rather friendship is an expression of moral activity on our part – of a type of regard for another person, a giving of oneself, and a caring for another for his own sake.

### IV

In the case of Kate and Sue, the 'moral activity' involved in the friendship is especially evident. For I have described the deep level of caring between the women as an outcome of effort and struggle, and hence as

a kind of moral achievement. Certainly, attaining a deep level of friendship, in which the parties mean a great deal to one another and care deeply for one another, often involves obstacles and difficulties, the overcoming of which requires effort. One friend disappoints the other, or feels let down by him; they misunderstand each other; they quarrel and feel that there are insuperable barriers between them. Such happenings within the history of a friendship can lead to a distancing and weakening of the bonds between the friends. Or they can constitute tests of the relationship, which ultimately strengthen the ties and deepen the meaning of the friendship. The friends can make the effort to rectify or to correct a misunderstanding, to struggle to achieve the greater mutual understanding which will prevent such disappointments and misunderstandings in the future.

It is difficult to conceive of a deep friendship which does not involve some such effort and struggle. Nevertheless, it is not such effort and struggle in its own right which grounds the moral significance of friendship. For one thing, friendships which involve something like the same level of caring do differ in the amount of effort and struggle which has gone into them, and, I would argue, it is not the effort and struggle but the level of caring itself which primarily determines the level of moral value in the friendship. It is the genuine care for another person which constitutes a moral activity of the self, not primarily the exertion of will or effort which might have gone into the development of that caring. In caring we as it were go out from ourselves to another person; we give of ourselves; we affirm the friend in his own right. These processes cannot be portrayed as something which merely happens to us, or which we simply experience, as is, e.g., finding ourselves attracted to someone. And so effort and will are not required for the activity essential to morality.<sup>5</sup> This is not to exclude the possibility, however, that effort and will could be a further source of moral value in a friendship beyond (though also requiring as a condition of this moral value) the caring involved.

Thus in a friendship in which the parties care deeply for each other but in which the relationship has developed without much pain, difficulty, effort, and struggle, there is still great moral merit in the caring.<sup>6</sup>

Another conception of friendship which conduces to failing to see its moral significance pictures friendship, or rather doing good for one's friends, as a kind of extension of the self, so that when one acts for the other one is simply promoting what is in a sense one's own good. This self-centredness would exclude friendship from being a moral good, much less a moral excellence.

Our discussion can help us to see what is wrong with this conception as a general characterization of friendship. For a genuine friend truly cares for the other for his own sake. He is willing to give of himself to promote the other's good; he understands the other in his own being and interests, and can distinguish the other's interests from his own, even while he is able to care deeply for their realization and in that sense identify with the friend and his good. He grieves for the friend's sorrows. He is happy for him at his good fortune or successes in valued endeavors; he is sad for him at his losses and disappointments. It is his human growth and happiness which he desires — and for the friend's own sake, not his own.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the sense of identification involved in genuine friendship is not a matter of self-interest at all, and caring for the friend is not simply an extension of caring for oneself. This mistaken conception of friendship trades on an ambiguity within the notion of 'identification,' which can have either an egoistic or a non-egoistic sense. Even in the non-egoistic sense described above, the one who identifies gets pleasure from the good accruing to the one with whom he identifies. But this pleasure is not the motive of his beneficent action; in fact it is a sign of the degree to which he cares for the other as other than himself and in his own right.

The conception of friendship as extended self-interest is more appropriate to a kind of symbiotic attachment to another person (in which one has no clear sense of a self separate from the other, and in which one lives through the other so that, in that sense, his pleasures are one's own). Such an attachment can be of great importance to the person, of great emotional intensity, and can take on some of the forms of friendship — but is not at all friendship in the fullest sense.<sup>8</sup>

In arguing that Kate cares for her friend Sue for Sue's sake and not for Kate's own, that Kate is aware of Sue in her otherness from herself, and that Kate gives of herself to Sue, I am not arguing that Kate sacrifices herself for Sue. Nor am I arguing that when she acts for Kate's

good, she acts in a manner unconnected with her own interests. She acts altruistically in the sense that her actions are motivated by genuine concern for her friend's weal and woe for its own sake; but not in the (more familiar) sense in which it implies acting in disregard of or contrary to one's own interests (see p. 10). But this is, partly, to say that the terms 'egoism' and 'altruism' as usually understood serve us ill in describing acting from friendship. Let us explore this further.

Friendship involves persons being bound up with one another. The different sorts of emotions and feelings which the friends have towards one another get their meaning and significance from the entire relationship of which they are a part.<sup>9</sup> In caring about the weal and woe of my friend Dave it is integral to the nature of this caring that it be for someone whom I like, whom I know likes me, who cares about my weal and woe, whom I trust, who is personally important to me, who cares about our friendship, etc. In acting from friendship towards Dave I express my acknowledgment of a relationship which includes all these feelings and attitudes. This is why the caring and the acts of beneficence in friendship are not separate from my own interests, from what is personally a good to me; it is not, in that sense, 'disinterested.' In fact friendship is a context in which the division between self-interest and other-interest is often not applicable. The friendship itself defines what is of importance to me, and in that sense what is in my interest. In that sense I do not generally sacrifice my own interest in acting for the good of my friend. I act with a sense of the friendship's importance to me, even though it is the friend whose benefit I directly aim at (i.e., which is my motive for acting), and not my own.

It is not that in acting for the friend's good I am acting from a combination of altruistic and egoistic motives, e.g., that I am both disinterestedly concerned with my friend's good, yet I also enjoy acting to help him. Nor am I acting from the former motive in combination with acting in order to preserve the friendship (which I am conceiving to be of benefit to me), nor in combination with the thought that my friend will be led to be more likely to benefit me in the future. These latter three portrayals involve possible motivations, which can be seen as a combination of an egoistic and an altruistic motive; but they are not accurate portrayals of our typical beneficent acts of friendship.

The way in which the value to me of my friendship with Dave figures into my acting for his good is not as a consideration for the sake of which I act. Nor is my liking of Dave a liking to do or enjoy doing every action which promotes his good. Rather, these figure in as a context of

meaning of my action. They are background conditions of my being motivated to act for the sake of Dave's good. I am not doing less than acting fully for the sake of his good, and in that sense altruistically.

The notion of sacrifice implies an interest which the agent forgoes in order to promote something which is not an interest of his. It implies a clear separation between the interest he forgoes and the one for the sake of which he acts. It is the absence of such a separation in the case of friendship which means that it is not true as a general characterization of acting from friendship that in acting for the good of one's friend one is sacrificing for him. (Nevertheless in some particular actions it would be true to say that we sacrificed something of what we wanted in order to help our friend.)<sup>10</sup>

## VI

Even if the notion that friendship is a kind of extended self-interest is abandoned, the previous discussion indicates what might be thought to be a moral deficiency in the kind of concern involved in friendship, namely that one would not have the concern if the other were not one's friend. The friendship, with all it involves, is a necessary condition for the concern, even if the concern is granted to be directed genuinely towards the friend for his own sake. Let us call this 'conditional altruism.'

Conditional altruism might be thought to be deficient precisely because it is not a universal form of concern. It is not directed towards the friend simply in virtue of his humanity but rather only in virtue of some relationship in which he stands towards oneself. This line of thinking, which I will call 'universalist,' is given a particularly stringent expression in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. He says that love of one's friend (one's beloved) has no moral value except insofar as it stems from a love which one would have for 'one's neighbor,' i.e., for any human being; and so, for example, if one saves a drowning person because he is one's friend — i.e., one would not do so if he were not one's friend — one's act would not have moral significance. Kierkegaard does not say there is anything wrong with loving one's friend and acting out of love for him; he says only that such love has no moral significance.<sup>11</sup>

A weaker view would be that love or concern for one's friend, though not without moral significance altogether, is yet in important ways

deficient as a moral attitude towards another person. Though Kant himself does not say this in his own discussions of friendship (which are generally sensitive and sensible),<sup>12</sup> it can be seen as an extension of some themes within the Kantian outlook, in particular the focus on universality and impartiality in the moral attitudes we take towards others. On this view conditional altruism would be, though not without value, yet without the full moral value that a universalistic altruism would have.

The consequences of this challenge to conditional altruism go far beyond the moral significance of friendship itself. For there are many sorts of special attachments, connections, and relationships between people — such as family member, neighbor (in the non-Christian sense), fellow worker, comrade, fellow member (of various organizations), member of same ethnic group of community, regular frequenter of the same pub, fellow citizen or countryman — which can be sources of a stronger sympathy, concern, and willingness to help one another than might exist in their absence.<sup>13</sup> The special connection or relationship is a condition of the altruism, which is therefore not purely universalistic.

Thus the issue here is at the core of the moral significance of the altruistic emotions themselves. For these special connections give rise to sympathy, compassion, and concern, and on the view which I am putting forth here these are morally good, independent of how they have arisen and whether they would exist towards the person in question in the absence of those special circumstances or relationships.

## VII

Let us then examine the universalist challenge to all conditional altruism, or altruism based on special relationships. On my view, such conditional altruism does involve concern for the other for his own sake. The fact that if he were not our friend we would not have this concern for him does not mean that it is not for his own sake that we care about him. What detracts from such concern is only if the regard to the other's good stems primarily from self-concern. One could be concerned about one's friend Joe primarily because how Joe is doing reflects on oneself in the eyes of others. One could be involved in helping poor persons who are members of one's ethnic group primarily because one feels that the existence of such persons reflects badly on the group as a whole, and therefore on oneself. These examples would be excluded by my

own formulation, of caring for the good of the other for his own sake, for they involve a primary concern with oneself rather than with the other.

On the other hand, if an Italian is dedicated to helping poor Italians, and is genuinely concerned for their welfare, then, even if he would not be so concerned if the persons were not Italians, he is still concerned genuinely for them for their own sakes; and, on my view, that attitude (and the actions stemming from it) have moral value.

Conditional altruism might be thought to be defective because concern with those in special relationships to oneself often takes the form primarily of hating, being opposed to, or denying the legitimacy of the interests of those outside the relationship in question. These are the familiar phenomena of chauvinism and provincialism. (It is less clear how this would work in regard to friendship; perhaps jealousy is an analogous phenomenon in that one's energies are directed against someone outside the relationship rather than towards one's friend or towards strengthening or enriching the relationship itself.)

There are two negative aspects of this chauvinism, which can exist independently of one another. The first is the opposition to those outside the relationship, an attitude bad in itself. The second is that the outside focus may mean a deficiency in one's concern for those within the relationship; one may be not so much genuinely concerned with their good as with hating or opposing those outside it. (Yet this connection is not an invariable one. It is quite possible for someone to be genuinely concerned with a group to which he is attached — to really care about their well-being — and yet also to have despicable attitudes towards those outside of his group.)

These are deficiencies within conditional altruism. But my view allows for the condemning of the despicable attitude towards those outside the special relationship, and also accords no moral value to the attitude towards those within it which does not consist in a genuine regard for the weal and woe of the persons in question. My view does, however, say that if the concern is genuine then it is *ceteris paribus* morally good; and if it is accompanied by a despicable attitude towards those outside then it is this accompanying attitude which is condemned and not the conditional altruism itself.

There may be some tendency on the part of a universalist outlook to think that conditional altruism always involves a negative attitude towards those who do not satisfy the condition. If this were true it would be a reason for regarding conditional altruism as a whole as



fundamentally defective. But it clearly is not true. A person may be deeply devoted to the welfare of the Italian community without being suspicious of, or wishing the harm of, non-Italians. He may even wish well for non-Italian communities and recognize the worthiness of their aspirations, though he does not have the actual concern for them which he has for his own community. Sympathy for the interests of other groups could fairly naturally grow from concern for the interests of one group. Conditional altruism merely implies not being as concerned about the good of those who do not satisfy the condition as one is about those who do. It does not necessarily involve having an attitude towards those who do not which is in itself morally deficient.

It is important to recognize that genuine devotion to a particular group — family, neighborhood, ethnic community, ethnic group, club — is in itself morally good, and becomes morally suspect only when it involves a deficient stance towards others. It is morally good in that it involves (among other things) an admirable degree of sympathy, compassion, and concern for others. Moral philosophy ought to be able to give expression to the moral value of such an attitude, and an exclusively universalist perspective cannot do so.

On the other hand, the pitfalls of such conditional altruism should not be ignored. The connection between concern for those who satisfy the condition and opposition to those who do not is often no mere coincidence. For example, in a situation of scarce resources, devotion to one group competing for those resources can well mean opposition to others, and this can easily involve blameworthy attitudes towards these other people. (It should be noted, however, that merely competing against other groups for resources which one desires for one's own is not in itself reprehensible. It becomes so only if one either competes in an unfair or despicable way, or if, as is unfortunately too natural, one comes to develop unjustified and negative attitudes towards the other group.) Moreover, in some situations alleged devotion to the welfare of one group can, as things stand, mean little more than hatred or opposition to groups outside. Devotion to the welfare of whites as whites in America would be an example of this; there is virtually no room for this to be a genuinely altruistic attitude, or for it really to be other than opposition to non-whites.

VIII

On the universalist view, one cares for the other in a fully morally appropriate manner only when one cares for him simply as a human being, i.e., independent of any special connection or attachment one has with him. On my view one's concern need only be genuinely for the other and not, directly or indirectly, for the sake of oneself. Whether one would care about the other in the absence of the special connections does not detract from its full moral value.

This is in no way to deny that it is morally good to have altruistic attitudes towards those with whom one has no special relationship; indeed such attitudes must be central to any moral view which places emphasis on the altruistic emotions. But it is to say that whatever factors encourage the development of genuinely altruistic attitudes are themselves to be regarded favorably, from a moral point of view. In addition, this is to be realistic in our moral outlook; for in general we do care more about those to whom we stand in some special relationship than about those to whom we do not. These relationships involve a deeper identification with the other's good than is customary in their absence; and it is entirely proper that they do so. It is true that some persons can develop a quite deep sense of identification with the good of others, or of particular groups of others (e.g., oppressed Chileans, people suffering from a certain disease) to whom they stand in no (prior) special relationship; and such an attitude does seem more morally admirable than conditional altruism of (if we might speak this way) the same strength. But such attitudes are too rare for a moral outlook to be built entirely around them (although in my view their moral value is still able to be given full articulation), and, in any case, their exceptional moral value is not a reflection of a deficiency in the moral value of conditional altruism.

The tradition of which Kierkegaard is a representative places sole emphasis on altruistic attitudes towards strangers, or towards others in abstraction from the special relationships in which we stand to them. This must be an incomplete conception of love or concern for others, though a conception (such as Aristotle's or those of Greek philosophers generally) which gives little or no place to the notion of concern for others simply as human beings is similarly incomplete. For both are significant forms of our concern for others for their own sake, and it is this which has moral value.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter has investigated friendship as a moral phenomenon. The full moral dimensions of friendship are difficult, if not impossible, to focus on within a Kantian framework, with its emphasis on obligatory conduct, on impersonal considerations, on universal attitudes. I have been particularly concerned to show that friendship can be morally excellent and not merely, as argued in chapter III, morally legitimate. But, in addition, all friendships are morally good to the extent that they involve a genuine concern with the good of another for his own sake (and, in that sense, involve self-transcendence).

In emphasizing, in contrast to the Kantian view, the moral dimensions of friendship, I want to avoid on the other side an overmoralized view of friendship, and of its personal and human significance. One such view sees the concern for the friend's good as the central element in friendship, downplaying or neglecting the liking of the friend, the desire to be with him, the enjoyment of shared activities, etc.<sup>15</sup>

A second overmoralized view sees friendship, or at least the highest forms of it, as having its grounds, its object, or the source of connection between the friends primarily in the friend's moral qualities and character; Aristotle, for example, seems to hold this view in his discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics*.

I argued in chapter II that it is no defect of personal feelings that they fail to have such moral grounding. The same argument holds for friendships. To make the friend's moral character the central feature of friendship is to neglect too much the shared liking and caring (and mutual recognition of these by the friends) and the shared activities in which these are expressed. These features, though not unrelated to a person's moral character, are not primarily grounded in them either.

One does not need to regard someone as a virtuous person in order to care for him as a friend; nor, in caring for him for his own sake need one focus primarily on whatever morally virtuous qualities he has.<sup>16</sup>

The arguments of this chapter and the previous one have also borne, directly and indirectly, on the altruistic emotions in general. Most obviously, friendship is a relationship in which sympathy and concern flourish, and an argument that beneficence prompted by friendship is morally good is an argument that beneficence prompted by altruistic emotion is morally good. Related to this, the argument that conditional altruism or altruism stemming from special relationships is morally good bears directly on many, though by no means all, forms of altruistic

emotion. In the background of these arguments is the argument of chapter III, refuting the Kantian view that the impartial perspective is required of us in all our actions. Clearing this argument out of the way is a necessary condition for building towards a positive view of the moral value of altruistic emotions.

In addition to providing a context for the altruistic emotions, friendship also can serve as a metaphor for them, in relation to the Kantian view. For the two conceptions of friendship which I have discussed as contradicting the view that friendship involves moral excellence have direct analogies to Kantian views of altruistic emotions. Analogous to the 'natural process' view of friendship (pp. 71-4) is the Kantian view that altruistic emotions, and emotions in general, are like natural processes over which we, as moral beings, have no control, and for which we cannot be blamed, praised, or morally assessed. Analogous to the 'extended self-interest' conception of friendship (pp. 75-7) is the Kantian view that acting from altruistic emotion — or, rather, acting from feeling or emotion in general — is acting out of a kind of self-interest, in that it involves acting to gratify an inclination or desire.

In chapter VIII I counter the former view of altruistic emotions and feelings. There I argue that we are not passive with respect to our feelings and emotions. They cannot be regarded as natural processes external to our moral agency, for which we cannot be morally assessed. Rather they are an expression of our moral being, just as the quality of a person's friendships is partly an expression of his moral being or character.

I do not counter the 'egoist' view of altruistic emotions directly in this book, partly because so much philosophic argument has gone into showing that this fairly crude form of psychological egoism is false.<sup>17</sup> If one accepts that acting from altruistic emotion involves acting genuinely altruistically then these well-known arguments will support my viewpoint here. In addition, in chapter II, I have tried to show that acting from altruistic emotions does not necessarily involve acting from inclination, but on the contrary can involve acting contrary to it; and that in fact it is a necessary feature of the altruistic emotions that they involve a willingness to sacrifice some of our own interests, comfort, or convenience, for the sake of another's good.