

Kant on Friendship

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Abstract: The concept of friendship occupies a crucial place in Kant's moral philosophy, both in his lectures before and in his writings after the Critique. The idea of friendship in Kant's thought can be analysed in three ways. First, it can be analysed within his entire philosophy. We compare the definitions in Kant's Lectures on Ethics and Metaphysics of Morals, where the concept is frequently discussed: in his first period, Kant seeks an ideal of friendship, while in his second period, he deals with friendship in terms of the possibility of moral friendship and its closely related concepts. From this point of view, the second possible way of analysing friendship is to consider it in terms of Kantian terminology. A conceptual framework accompanies friendship, and Kant presents it through a set of terms such as love, respect and trust. Finally, we can discover the influential friendships in Kant's life through the biographies available. In particular, J. Green, who influenced Kant's punctuality, and Wasianski, who was in his service, have an essential place in understanding Kant's understanding of friendship..

Keywords: Kant, friendship, duty, respect, morality.

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Introduction

It would be surprising if Kant, the founder of a great philosophical system that starts from the analysis of human cognitive abilities and reaches the universal moral law, did not make any determinations about the concept of friendship, which is thought to contain the noblest moral values between two people. Friendship has been discussed in both his pre-Critical and post-Critical works. Kant's works include separate chapters or passages on friendship in various contexts. However, as he realises, there is more to friendship than what is described in any philosopher's text or directly encountered in life. The issue of friendship can be put forward in terms of the basic concepts of Kant's general moral theory, such as respect, love and equality. Furthermore, Kant's biographies suggest that he, contrary to his typically described or caricatured punctual and secretive personality, was a sociable person and approached 'friendship' through the friendships he formed or observed. His friendship with the merchant J. Green is a good example of this. When we consider these points, three perspectives become possible that can help us address questions such as 'On what grounds can the concept of friendship be dealt with in Kant?' and 'Is it possible to talk about a change in the idea of friendship in terms of the distinctions made in Kant's moral philosophy?':

a) To compare, in terms of continuity, Kant's *Lectures on Ethics* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in which he addresses friendship under a distinct title.

b) Accordingly, to explore the relation of friendship to respect, love and equality in the context of both his general moral philosophy and these two works.

c) Focusing on his biographies¹, looking at his relationships with those he characterised as friends, especially with J. Green. A perspective grounded on his understanding of temperament may be accompanied here.

¹ In Geier's words, we have a rich content of Kant's biography: "Shortly after his death, the first major biographies, by L. E. Borowski, R. B. Jachmann, and E. A. Ch. Wasianski, appeared in 1804 and were then continued by Kuno Fischer (1860) and Karl Vorländer (1911/1924), as well as Arsenij Gulyga (1977), Wolfgang Ritzel (1985), and Manfred Kuehn (2001). One cannot complain about a lack of material on Kant's life and character." (Geier, 2004, p. 238). In addition to these studies, we can also include Manfred Geier's own work *Kants Welt*, A. Wood's *Kant* and Thomas De Quincey's *The Last Days of Immanuel Kant*.



Friendship Before and After the *Critique*

If we look at the entirety of Kant's works in practical philosophy, we find two works where he systematically analysed the concept of 'friendship'. The first is *Lectures on Ethics*, a collection of lectures he delivered in Königsberg between 1775 and 1780, later compiled into a book. Friendship was an essential theme in the lectures Kant delivered during his university years. These lectures were preserved as notes taken by his students and have survived to the present day. One collection of lecture notes, recorded by Collins, is from approximately 1775 – six years prior to the publication of *Critique of Pure Reason* and the onset of Kant's critical philosophy. Another set, transcribed by Vigilantius, dates to 1793/4, which is eight years after *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and three years before *The Metaphysics of Morals*² (Sensen, 2013, p. 151). The other fundamental work is *The Metaphysics of Morals*, which he published in 1797. Consequently, both works can be regarded as theoretical foundations that shape his understanding of friendship. In his main critical works, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*³ and *The Critique of Practical Reason*⁴, Kant does not discuss the concept of friendship.

² Impe, based on the long period covered by Kant's lectures on ethics, classifies them into early and late periods. This classification places the early period lectures between 1770 and 1780, while the late ones fall within the years 1793 and 1794. However, a more detailed evaluation is made for the notes used in both periods: Kant taught moral philosophy for twenty-eight semesters from 1756 to 1794. His *Lectures on Ethics* are based on student notes, which were later turned into manuscripts. There are twenty-three original manuscripts, with twelve still available. The ten surviving ones include: an-Berlin, an-Dilthey, an-Friedländer, an-Mrongovius I, Brandt, Collins, Herder, Kaehler, Mrongovius II, and Powalski. An eleventh manuscript, Vigilantius, exists as a handwritten copy, while the twelfth, Brauer, was published in 1924 but is now lost. In 1926, Kraus showed that twelve of the manuscripts came from a common source. Kant's *Lectures on Ethics* are divided into five sets of notes: (1) LE Herder (1763–1764), (2) a group of thirteen from 1774–1775 to 1776–1777, (3) LE Powalski (1782–1783), (4) LE Mrongovius II (1784–1785), and (5) LE Vigilantius (1793–1794) (Impe, 2011, pp. 127–128).

³ Terminologically, 'friendship' is used in this work only when expressing the value of the duty. Kant argues that reason dictates what should happen, independent of all appearances and for its own sake. He suggests that actions that never performed in the world and whose possibility could be questioned based solely on experience are constantly commanded by reason. For instance, he claims that pure honesty in friendship can be demanded of every person, even if no one has ever encountered a genuinely honest friend (Kant, 1999a, p. 62).

⁴ Friendship is used once to give an example of lying. He states that everyone has probably noticed that every more or less honest person stays away from a lie that will save him from a difficult situation or that will benefit a friend he loves, and that he does this so as not to be looked down upon in his own eyes (Kant, 1999b, p. 210).



Friendship in the *Lectures on Ethics*

As mentioned above, the manuscripts from Kant's lectures on ethics, preserved by his students, form this work. Multiple copies exist created by different students. Instead of seeking chronological development among these versions, it seems more reasonable to evaluate this period by following Kraus's claim, based on philological methods, that the twelve original manuscripts originated from a common ancestor text, starting with Vigilantius's manuscripts (Impe, 2011, pp. 127-128). Another piece of evidence that justifies this approach is that the classification covers the period when Kant had not written his major works yet. So, the notes by Vigilantius stand out because they are final. Although Kant did not directly develop the ethics of duty within the framework of moral laws in these lectures, he made detailed determinations about the duties of man. He also focused on various practical life issues, including friendship, which seems to be an independent field of inquiry. In Kant's lectures, the concept of friendship is examined by considering the anthropological aspect of man, is discussed under the title 'Duties toward Others', and is finally classified in terms of its kinds:

a) In man, the motive of self-love derives from himself, and the motive of love of humanity drives from others are in constant struggle (Kant, 1930, p. 200). This conflict cannot yield happiness by choosing self-love. "We attach particular importance to whatever promotes the worth of our own person" (Kant, 1930, p. 201). In this case, man's choice will be directed towards the love of humanity instead of self-love. Considering both options, one will realise that actions based on self-love will only provide happiness for one and neglect others. However, cultivating the happiness of others not only promotes a collective sense of joy but also ensures man's own happiness in life. So, "this is the Idea of friendship, in which self-love is superseded by a generous reciprocity of love" (Kant, 1930, p. 201). Thus, friendship is presented as the idea of commitment with love in man's effort to gain value for himself, and love is the ontological basis of friendship.

b) Kant continues to examine friendship through 'love of humanity that derives from others'. The second determination of the concept is made by considering its attribution. Accordingly, "friendship is an Idea, because it is not drawn from experience. Empirical examples of friendship



are extremely defective. It has its seat in the understanding. In ethics, however, it is a very necessary Idea” (Kant, 1930, p. 202). He reveals the determination that friendship is an idea by comparing it with the ‘ideal’ and the ‘measure’. If the measure is not determined *a priori*, it is arbitrary; if determined, it is necessary: “Where this standard is employed as a measure of lesser quantities, it is an Idea; when it is used as a pattern, it is an Ideal” (Kant, 1930, p. 202). Timmons explains both concepts with an example:

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes between idea (*Idee*) and ideal (*Ideal*). These are technical terms in Kant. An idea is a concept of complete perfection, such as the concept of God. An ideal is ‘an individual thing’ that realizes a corresponding idea. (Timmons, 2021, p. 254)

Friendship, which is the pinnacle of people’s loving tendencies towards each other, must be an idea in this respect. Therefore, a perfect friendship does not seem possible.⁵ Kant repeatedly expresses this conclusion with the sentence, “My dear friends, there are no friends”, which is attributed to Aristotle.⁶ Denis considers this as a fourth category of

⁵ Kant also expresses this situation as follows: “This perfect concept of a thing is the idea, but if one fabricates an image in keeping with this idea, then this is an ideal. Because this idea is the model of perfection, it thus pleases us so, that we are misled to believe that such can actually take place in the world. In this way, everyone has an idea of friendship in its complete purity in his head, *although it is not to be found in the whole world*. One can assess all friendship in accordance with this idea. However, who realizes this idea, who expects that it should actually take place in the world, and even to the degree of it which he produces in his head, he falls into the enthusiasm of friendship. (Kant, 2012, p. 95; *italics added*).

On the other hand, Gregor evaluates the lack of perfect friendship in the context of love and respect. The concept of perfect friendship, defined as a union of mutual love and respect, faces several challenges. Achieving a balance of love and respect between friends is difficult; if one person loves more, it can diminish the respect felt by the other. Additionally, maintaining emotional closeness while upholding practical respect can lead to misunderstandings, where one may perceive the other’s boundaries as a lack of love. Furthermore, while friends should support each other in times of need, asking for or accepting help can disrupt the equality of respect in the relationship. Thus, according to Gregor, Kant argues that perfect friendship remains an ideal that cannot be fully achieved in human relationships (Gregor, 1963, p. 199-200).

⁶ According to M. Geier, Kant probably learned about this paradox through the essay ‘On Friendship’ (1580) by one of his favourite writers, Michel de Montaigne, who was also a philosopher (Geier, 2004, p. 277). Could there be a Montaigne influence on Kant, based on Kuehn’s identification of him as ‘one of his favourite writers’? From Aristotle’s proposition that ‘good lawgivers have paid more attention to friendship than to justice,’ Montaigne concludes that ‘of a perfect society friendship is the peak’. This is immediately followed by the statement that none of the kinds of the conception of friendship (fostered by pleasure and profit and public or private interest) can really replace true friendship. Nor can the four types of friendship be recognised by the ancients –natural, social, hospitable, and sexual– (Montaigne, 1993, p. 92). These considerations of Montaigne, it seems, heralds Kant’s



friendship, apart from the types of friendship to be mentioned below. The friendship here is not “–perfect, ideal or complete friendship–; we can only approximate it. Kant’s understanding of perfect friendship includes elements from each of the other types, and especially emphasizes the defining characteristics of moral friendship” (Denis, 2001, p. 3).

c) Kant thirdly discusses the forms of friendship. Here, a classification of three types of friendship is presented, which is similar enough to remind us of Aristotle: friendship based on need, taste and disposition. The first kind of friendship is the oldest and is inversely proportional to the increase and decrease of needs. The friendship of need begins when people form friendships with each other to meet their needs. According to Kant, thanks to this kind of friendship that existed in primitive times, a person going hunting meets the needs of another, and one person secures the other. When we examine this type of friendship, we see that people care about each other’s needs in life and share each other’s concerns. "To be humane is to have sympathy with the fate of others; to be inhumane is to harbour no such feelings of sympathy" (Kant, 1930, p. 198). The idea of need, present in all forms of friendship, can be significant as long as the principles of nobility and trust are preserved. According to Kant, friendship arising from taste does not constitute true friendship but merely resembles it. In the context of the examples provided by Kant, it is unlikely that individuals within the same profession develop friendships based solely on mutual liking. Instead, the origin of this type of friendship lies in the differences. Therefore, the relationship or togetherness established in this type of friendship is essential. There is a distinction between friendships among people engaged in the same profession and friendships among those with interests in different fields. People can meet their needs within the fields they are interested in and involved in. Consequently, individuals from other fields can contribute to them; the element that creates the bond between people is the provision of contribution. Finally, friendship based on disposition involves a clear understanding. It is a friendship without demands and, therefore, is uncertain. Friendship of disposition, or sentimental friendship, considers conditions. It arises from the fact that people are cautious about the conditions of the environment they find themselves

ideal of friendship.



in. However, at the same time, the impulse that drives a person to join a community is their desire to connect with others like them, to reveal their feelings or mentality. Through the realisation of this desire, people have an opportunity to correct their own judgments or ideas (Kant, 1930, pp. 203-205). In its true sense, friendship is based on disposition. “There is no question here of any service, or of any demand”. It involves “dispositions of the feelings, which are not dispositions to actual service” (Kant, 1930, p. 205). The reason for the emergence of this type of friendship is determined by our having “a strong impulse to disclose ourselves, and enter wholly into fellowship” (Kant, 1930, p. 206). A person who initially has difficulty expressing themselves in the community, after being freed from social pressure, needs, as Kant describes, a friend “in whom we can confide unreservedly, to whom we can disclose completely all our dispositions and judgments, from whom we can and need hide nothing, to whom we can communicate our whole self” (Kant, 1930, pp. 205-206). In general terms, this friendship can be summarised as follows:

- a) It arises from the sociality of man.
- b) A friend who has an honest disposition, is known to be affectionate and is far from malice and hypocrisy helps correct judgments in times of error.
- c) People have weaknesses, and these should be even hidden from a friend.
- d) One should not expose oneself to one’s best friend other than one is and is known to be (Kant, 1930).

Friendship in *The Metaphysics of Morals*

The Metaphysics of Morals is one of Kant’s last works (1797/8). The fundamental considerations in this work, which set out the metaphysical foundations of law and morality, are as follows:

- a) The work begins with Kant’s most well-known definition of friendship: “*Friendship* (considered in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect.” (Kant, 1999c, p. 584). This is Kant’s most widely used definition, like the first one he gave in *Lectures on Ethics*, to which respect is added, thus expressing the most essential elements of friendship as equality, love and respect.



Friendship is presented as a duty: “Human beings have a duty of friendship” (Kant, 1999c, p. 585). If we recall that duty in his other work defined as “(...) the necessity of my action from pure respect for the practical law is what constitutes duty” (Kant, 1999a, p. 58), friendship emerges as a moral obligation in Kant’s philosophy. This obligation is moral. Friendship, Kant states, should not be based on mutual benefit but must instead be purely moral. Any help one might expect from the other in times of need should not be seen as the ultimate purpose or defining basis of the friendship (Kant, 1999c, p. 586). Hence “striving for friendship...is a duty set by reason, and no ordinary duty but an honorable one.” (Kant, 1999c, p. 585). There are several aspects to this task. For instance, from a moral standpoint, it is a friend’s duty to bring attention to the faults of the other. This act, rooted in care and concern, ultimately serves the best interests of the friend and exemplifies true love (Kant, 1999c, p. 585).

c) Friendship is so fragile that it remains perpetually vulnerable to disruptions if it is based solely on feelings. Without principles or rules to temper excessive familiarity and balance mutual love with respect, it cannot endure (Kant, 1999c, p. 586). Love, on the other hand, is not precisely a constitutive element. The love that exists in friendship cannot be just a fleeting emotion; such feelings are often blunt in their decisions and eventually dissipate (Kant, 1999c, p. 586).

d) Moral friendship, unlike friendships based purely on feelings, is built on a deep trust where two people feel safe sharing their private thoughts and feelings with one another, if these exchanges uphold mutual respect. True friendship of this kind also requires that a trustworthy friend keeps any shared secrets completely confidential. No matter how reliable someone else may seem, those secrets should never be shared without clear permission from the person who confided them.⁷ (Kant, 1999c, pp. 586, 587). So, Kant is cautious about friendship.

e) Humans are inherently social creatures, and in fostering their social environment, they have a deep instinct to share their true selves with

⁷ Kant also expresses this situation in his lectures. According to him, friendship is a noble relationship, and it should be maintained as much as possible. However, if one day the friendship ends, the person is obliged to keep the secrets of their friend and not to use these against them. He also finds the Italian proverb, ‘Treat your friend as if one day he might be your Enemy’ detestable due to its inclusion of insincerity (Kant, 2012, p. 482).



others (Kant, 1999c, p. 586).

f) A true friend of humanity is someone who sincerely cares about the well-being of others, celebrating their happiness and feeling genuine remorse if they ever cause harm. But being a "friend of humanity" goes beyond simply loving people—it means treating everyone with a deep sense of fairness and equality. It's about recognizing that acts of kindness aren't one-sided; they create a bond, a shared sense of obligation, as if we're all part of one big family, connected by a common desire for everyone's happiness (Kant, 1999c, p. 587).

As can be observed, Kant's considerations on friendship consist of three elements: the definition of friendship, the duties and responsibilities of friends towards each other, and the nature of friendship. At the same time, it is possible to identify some differences in the treatment of friendship before and after the Critique. First, in the definition of friendship in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, respect is not only incorporated into the initial definition but also becomes more essential than love, particularly when considering the statement that "in any case, the love in friendship cannot be an affect; for emotion is blind in its choice, and after a while it goes up in smoke" (Kant, 1999c, p. 586). Perhaps Kant fears that love might transform into self-love. For the formation of a moral community, self-love, which arises from inclination, is not sufficient. The subordination of self-love to the law enables the inclination to move away from selfishness and self-interest. Because "you might conceivably have it, or something like it, in a society governed entirely by self-love as a result of action and reaction, but there would be no morality there." (Paton, 1946, p. 157). Secondly, in his writings after the Critique, Kant discusses friendship on a moral basis rather than examining its types. As Sensen states, while Kant acknowledges that morality places limits on friendship, he does not argue this from the perspective of the superiority of morality. He simply states that friendship can only exist when it abides by moral rules (Sensen, 2013, p. 151). Thirdly, in the post-Critical period, the characteristics of friendship, such as one friend showing the other her mistakes, the need for complete trust, and keeping a secret until the end, are noteworthy.

A. Wood, taking into account both periods of Kant and based on *Lectures on Ethics* and *Metaphysics of Morals*, presents the fundamental elements



of his understanding of friendship as follows: reciprocal benevolence, equality, reciprocal possession, intimate communication, and love toward reciprocal well-pleasedness (Wood, 1999, pp. 278-280). In addition to these concepts, respect should also be mentioned.

Friendship in Kant's Life

Whether a philosopher's experiences influence their writings can also be asked of Kant, and we have enough biographical material to answer this question positively. As Stohr also points out, the typical description of Kant as solely focused on abstract ethical issues is a *caricature*. His writings on ethics extensively address social relationships and the ethical issues they present. Kant drew from his personal experiences, valuing friendships and social interactions, which led him to offer insightful philosophical perspectives on these important relationships (Stohr, 2023, p. 58).

Therefore, an examination of Kant's various biographies reveals that he had many friends and suggests that these friendships influenced him. The biographies of Borowski, Jachmann and Wasianski⁸ –who were witnesses to Kant's life– along with the works of M. Kuehn and M. Geier constitute the foundation for this assessment. Notably, Jachmann's 1804 biography, which incorporates firsthand testimonies, portrays Kant as a 'friendly person'. This characterisation can be illustrated with some quotations:

Kant was particularly distinguished by a warm feeling for friendship. I have had so much opportunity to experience this amiable side of his heart, and have so much evidence of his friendship towards me in my hands, that I can tell you exactly how Kant thought and acted as a friend (...) Kant was a warm, cordial, sympathetic friend, and retained this warm, cordial feeling of friendship until his old age. His sensitive soul was constantly occupied with everything that concerned his friends; he took to heart the most minor circumstances of their lives; he was deeply concerned at their misfortunes and

⁸ It is Borowski, Jachmann, and Wasianski's biographies of Immanuel Kant that are the best known as well as the most critical of all contemporary biographies of the philosopher. All three owe their existence to the authors' direct acquaintance with him; their exceptional value lies in the fact that each illuminates a different phase of Kant's life from the perspective of the person who lived it: in Borowski's work, we first meet the young Magister; Jachmann portrays Kant at the height of his creative work; Wasianski takes us into Kant's older age (Malter, 1986, p. xix).



heartily rejoiced when threatening dangers had a happy outcome (...) If Kant ever showed a deep understanding of human nature, it was primarily in his friendships. He was imbued with the value of genuine friendship, but he also knew how this value of friendship could be maintained. Therefore, he remained faithful and steadfast in his friendship. Anyone who had once indeed won his heart could always enjoy his unchanging, loving friendship. (Jachmann, 2012, pp. 134, 137, 140)

Wasianski, on the other hand, offers a perspective on Kant's conception of the possibility of an ideal friendship, rooted in the distinction between idea and ideal, discussed earlier. Accordingly, Kant expressed the previously mentioned Aristotelian statement, "My dear friends, there is no such thing as a friend" in his daily life, and this view was reliable for Kant until his last days:

Kant had adopted Aristotle's dazzling paradox: My dear friends, there are no friends. He did not seem to give the expression "friend" its usual meaning, but rather to use it in the same way as the word "servant" in the closing formula of a letter or in a normal greeting of recommendation. I disagreed with him on this. I have a friend, in the complete sense of the word, whose value made it impossible for me to agree with Kant's opinion. Up to this point, Kant had been self-sufficient, and since he only knew suffering by name, he did not need a friend. Now, almost depressed by his weakness, he looked around for support, without which he could no longer maintain himself. When, therefore, on the occasion of his very pressing assurance of friendship, I expressed my disbelief with regard to that paradox, he was frank enough to admit that he now agreed with me and did not consider friendship to be a mere chimaera. (Wasianski, 2012, pp. 217-8)

It seems possible to evaluate all these quotations briefly: From Jachmann's perspective, who observed Kant at the peak of his intellectual powers, Kant placed great importance on friendship as a value. The concept constantly occupied his thoughts, from his lectures to his works. On the other hand, Wasianski, who was in close contact with Kant during his last days, observed his fragility concerning friendship and life. This perspective provides a lens through which the statements in *The Metaphysics of Morals* can be interpreted. As Geier also points out: "When Kant had been self-sufficient and knew suffering only by name, perhaps he really did not need



a friend. But now, in 1800, in his old age and almost prone to collapse due to weakness, he was looking for support and found it in Wasianski” (Geier, 2004, p. 277). Therefore, Kant’s ideal friendship emerged, albeit late, in Wasianski’s friendship.

On the other hand, it is known that Kant analysed certain personality traits in his anthropological studies, four of which are categorised based on the human physiological constitution in the ‘On Temperament’ section in his book: the sanguine person, the melancholy person, the choleric person, and the phlegmatic person (Kant, 2006, pp. 186-191). A noteworthy observation relevant to our purpose is the connection Kant establishes between melancholic personality and friendship. This connection is particularly remarkable in *The Lectures on Anthropology*:

The melancholic person is affected in friendship; with him it is a matter of the heart, but not with the sanguine individual. However, if the melancholic one is offended in friendship, then he does not become reconciled so easily, and even if he becomes reconciled, yet he still thinks about the past. (Kant, 2012, p. 185)

The melancholic person is steadfast in friendship; to be sure he demands much from a friend, but he is also ready to render much to him in return. He sticks to that which interests him; he is full of suspicion, and raises difficulties about everything. With regard to promises, the claims to friendship of others, and thankfulness, he is the direct opposite of the sanguine person. (Kant, 2012, p. 299)

Does the melancholic personality described here also apply to Kant? The judgement on this issue comes from M. Geier, who claims to have conducted a ‘self-analysis’ of Kant’s short work, *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime*. From the observations⁹ in the relevant text, Geier identifies the

⁹ According to Kant, a melancholic person does not care much about the judgments of others and relies solely on their own insight. Since their motivations are principled, they do not easily lean toward other thoughts; this can sometimes lead to stubbornness. They remain indifferent to changes in fashion and view its superficiality with disdain. Friendship is sacred to them; they may lose an inconsistent friend, but that friend cannot easily forget them. Even the memory of past friendships deserves respect in their eyes. They place great value on honesty and despise lies. They exalt human dignity and believe that everyone deserves respect. They do not accept degrading submission and carry a sense of freedom. Any form of servitude disgusts them. They are a harsh judge of both themselves and others and often feel a sense of weariness (Kant, 2011, p. 28).



most important values that influenced Kant's life: "personal insight, reliable friendship, truthfulness towards oneself and others and an autonomous need for freedom" (Geier, 2004, p. 242). Therefore, one of Kant's fundamental life maxims is firm friendship.

Let us also look at his relationship with J. Green, who is regarded as his close friend. Wood states that Kant "made his longest and most intimate friendship, with... Joseph Green" and that "many of the characteristics pertaining to the ...picture that was later formed of him was through Green's influence."¹⁰ (Wood, 2005, p. 8). Similarly, M. Kuehn claims that his often-satirised punctuality also stems from this friendship. Kant's punctuality was likely due, at least initially, to Green's strict punctuality. Neighbours, reportedly, set their clocks by the time Kant left Green's house at seven o'clock each evening. And one anecdote, Kuehn informs us, shows Green's punctuality: he and Kant once planned a countryside trip at 8:00 A.M. the next day. Green, ready by 7:45, left exactly at 8:00 despite Kant's absence. When he later passed Kant on the road, waving for him to stop, Green refused, staying true to his principles (Kuehn, 2002, p. 155).

Conclusion

Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, which are regarded as the fundamental works of his studies in ethics, do not provide a binding determination on friendship. This is because viewing Kant's understanding of friendship solely within the framework of lawful action presented in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, or even considering friendship as a kind of obligation based on his texts where it appears as a duty, would be incomplete when the totality of his philosophy is taken into account. Paton highlights this point and explains why an interpretation of Kant that disregards this complete picture of his philosophy is simply wrong. It's really surprising that so many people criticise Kant for focusing *only* on abstract rules and ignoring the actual *goals* of morality. This is especially baffling because Kant repeatedly states that his ethical system (unlike his legal philosophy) is all about the goals that we have a moral *duty* to pursue. The only way someone could misunderstand

¹⁰ Similarly, Jachmann states that Green was Kant's closest and most intimate friend (Jachmann, 2012, p. 135).



this is if they didn't really grasp what he was trying to do in his foundational work (the *Groundwork*) and, instead of carefully reading his later, more detailed work (*Metaphysics of Morals*), just made up their own ideas about what he *must* have meant (Paton, 1946, p. 57). Therefore, it seems more accurate to characterise Kant's approach to friendship –and even other moral problems– as values embedded in real life, rather than quantifying them directly within the law-maxim relationship. On the other hand, in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, considered his final work, and in his *Lectures on Ethics*, which consists of lectures delivered between 1775 and 1780, friendship is examined in detail. The difference between the perspectives in Kant's fundamental works (*Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*) and *The Metaphysics of Morals* can be articulated as follows: in the first group of works, the formulation and universalisation of maxims are central, whereas, in the second period, the taxonomy of ethical duties takes precedence (Wood, 1999, pp. 323-324). Thus, the idea of friendship in *The Metaphysics of Morals* should be understood within this taxonomy. Viewing this taxonomy through the lens of Kant's understanding of morality in relation to 'friendship' enables a unique evaluation of Kant's moral philosophy. The judgement on the morality of an action encompasses more than just the universalisation of a maxim.

Secondly, the treatment of friendship in the two works, where it is the subject of intensive inquiry, deserves emphasis. Kant begins with the assertion that ideal friendship is unattainable. In his last work, he examines friendship through the concepts it encompasses, situating it within an ethical framework. Kant's views on friendship illustrate its existence in the context of values and human relationships. What requires discussion here is the resolution of the tension between an ideal and a duty. "Friendship is both an idea, as such unattainable in practice, and a duty, meaning a morally required action of human beings. Kant says that there are actual human friendships, even though none of them fully realizes the idea of perfect friendship as such." (Wike, 2014, p. 143). The nature of man explains why perfect friendship cannot exist: "There is no such thing as a perfect friendship because there is no such thing as a perfect person" (Stohr, 2023, p. 61).

Finally, it can be said that friendship held a significant place in Kant's personal life. For him, friendship was not merely a theoretical concept



described in his works but a value he sought to realise in his own life. The title 'friendly' attributed to him in his biographies serves as clear evidence of this. Moreover, if we interpret his writings on melancholic friendship as autobiographical reflections, the value and importance he attached to friendship become even more apparent.

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Öz: Kant'ın ahlak felsefesinde dostluk kavramı hem Eleştiri Döneminden önceki derslerinde hem de Eleştiri'den sonraki yazılarında önemli bir yer tutar ve üç şekilde analiz edilebilir. İlk olarak, felsefesinin bütünü içerisinde ki kavramın sıklıkla tartışıldığı Etik Üzerine Dersler ve Ahlak Metafiziği'ndeki tanımları karşılaştırabiliriz. Kant, ilk döneminde ideal bir dostluk arayışındayken, ikinci döneminde dostluğu ahlaki dostluğun imkânı ve onunla yakından ilişkili kavramlar açısından ele alır. Kantçı dostluğu analiz etmenin ikinci olası yolu, kavramı



terminoloji açısından ele almaktır. Dostluğa kavramsal bir çerçeve eşlik eder ve Kant bunu sevgi, saygı ve güven gibi bir dizi terim aracılığıyla sunar. Son olarak, mevcut biyografiler aracılığıyla Kant'ın hayatındaki etkili dostlukları ortaya konulabilir ki özellikle Kant'ın dakiklığını etkileyen J. Green ve onun hizmetinde bulunan Wasianski, Kant'ın dostluk anlayışını anlamada önemli bir yere sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kant, dostluk, ödev, saygı.

