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ACHILLES OR PATROCLUS?[1]

G. E. MOORE

I believe all the brothers understand that the subject of my paper is to be 'friendship' in general. I chose the form of question 'A. or P.?' from a weak desire to comply with the custom of the society, - to be terse and epigrammatic. Yet I think I can justify this form: It may be interpreted which of these two (taking them as a model pair of friends) had the preferable lot. I answer (and my answer may seem to be hyperbolical) that both were equally happy – that in possesssing the perfect friendship of one another they each possessed a source of happiness so great that all the advantages of beauty, birth, strength, and fame, which might seem to weigh down the balance in favour of Achilles, are negligible in camparison. What truth there may be in this hyperbole, I hope first to make clear: the form of question also suggests another topic, - how far in friendship it is necessary that one party should be active (erastés) and the other passive (erómenos), and what effects on the happiness of each follow from this activity or passivity – in sodomy or otherwise; this shall be afterwards discussed.

I have not resisted my impulse to try to connect the subject with the whole theory of the universe: and before I step on to this to me forbidden ground, I must throw a sop to the dragon who guards it. I cannot plead any right to enter: but I only beg McTaggart, if I am quite on the wrong track, to say so very clearly – to tell me what I may attempt, what not; if on the other hand, he thinks, that even where I sit as it were in the Platonic cave, I may come to comprehend some little glimpse of reality, I beseech him then that he will do his best to shew it me.

In order to prove friendship so immensely valuable, as I estimated it above, it seems necessary in some way to define the 'good' and show the relation of friendship to it. Now let consciousness be analysed into three parts, the will, the intellectual, and the emotional.

[1] This paper was delivered by Moore in November 10, 1894, to the secret society "The Apostles" and it shows his praise of friendship, which will be considered one of the highest goods in *Principia Ethica*. It was part of Moore´s unpublished work (Cambridge University Library: Add8875/12/1/2a).

Which of these is it, or all, whose perfection gives us the end of life? The will may be rejected, as only the efficient cause, or perhaps the accompaniment of the other two. The highest function of the intellect is to perceive the whole of what is and the whole of what should be (which perhaps are not different) – that is to know the true and the good. This mere knowledge it seems to me impossible to regard as an end in itself – certainly, if it be so, it is different in kind from any of the ends which we practically pursue: these are all satisfactory states of emotion such as could only accompany knowledge, not be identified with it. There remains the emotional faculty, the perfection of which I cannot but consider as the final end of all life: it is on the activities of this faculty that pleasure (the most obvious of practical ends) attends, and on its perfect activity, I conceive, attends happiness, which is a perfect and complete pleasure. The intellect is only a means to obtaining this highest pleasure, by discovering that which can excite it: it is possible to conceive of a perfectly happy being without either will or intellect (though in the world as we know it, he must have had them first in order to arrive at perfect happiness), but the idea of a perfect activity of will and intellect, without any emotional faculty to take pleasure in their activities, seems to me absolutely incompatible with happiness. Thus God´s perfection is summed up not in his 'knowledge of all,' but in his 'love of all,' that is, presumably, the love of himself, who is the whole of reality.

We, the imperfect, also only obtain such end as is within our reach, when we too are loving the best reality that we know. Best, I say, because reality, owing to our imperfection, appears to us as part good, part bad: we cannot love the whole, because we cannot see it all to be good, as God does; therefore we must love the best we see. But again we cannot love abstractions, such as our idea of perfection, so well as we can love a reality. God loves only reality, which may indeed correspond to our idea of perfection but is lovable only because ´tis real. We must, then, love the best real thing we know, in order to attain to the utmost happiness of which our imperfect soul is capable: and this thing will be another human soul; for, when we most love the beauty of nature, we love an imagination of our own minds, an unreal thing; and, when we love the creation of another mind, a picture, poem, or symphony, surely the mind which created it must be much more lovable? Thus the best man is the most worthy object of our love. But here again we must remember our imperfections: (1) we have not capacity enough to love all the best that we see, (2) the love

of men dead or otherwise beyond our reach must be fainter as depending on the memory or imagination, than that of those who are often present with us, (3) our intellectual capacity of judging what is best, though it raises our emotional capacity along with it, yet always keeps ahead of it, so that we are only able to love something inferior to that which at times we most admire and always pronounce to be best. The object of our most perfect love must therefore be often present to us, must be limited in extent, and must not be better in kind than will correspond to our average capacity for loving.

In loving such an object, it would appear from the foregoing argument that we perform the highest function of which our nature is capable – that on which happiness depends; the highest activity of our intellect having been always a necessary means to our perceiving the most lovable, and thus indirectly determining our choice, but only a means. And thus the seeming hyperbole with which I began, turns out to be no more than true: and a perfectly sober judgment will accept the lines of Coleridge.

All thoughts etc.

[All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame. – Coleridge. 'Love.']

I will now proceed to define more exactly the nature of this permanent emotion or passion which I call love, and to determine what is the proper object of it. I have hitherto tacitly made three important assumptions (1) that this passion is the same as friendship (2) that its object must be only one human being (3) that we ourselves cannot be the proper object of our own love.

I will dismiss the 3rd first because it is not of much importance for the purposes of this paper. I said above that God´s perfect love was of himself because he was the whole of reality, which for him too is perfectly good: we certainly are unable to spend all our power of passion on ourselves but must have something external to ourselves; the basis of love is sympathy; and there seems some explanation of this in the fact that in thus connecting something external with ourselves we first gain a true notion of reality and go some way towards the all-embracing love of God.

Now for my second assumption. I have already given some reasons for it in explaining the imperfection of our own capacities. It does indeed seem an experimented

[sic] fact that such a perfect and lasting passion as I speak of, can only be felt by each of us towards one other person: and, that this may appear more plainly, I will here try to set out in detail what I take to be the marks or 'notes' of love or friendship, and how this passion arises. The question of how far passion should enter into friendship, one on which Plato and Bacon, at least, are against me, I will discuss later. Here I give my own view.

When first we see the man or woman capable of being the object of our love, there is always something in him which we like. This may at first sight be very little, perhaps only some physical beauty or a tone of his voice, and we may not be able to discover what it is: but it is sufficient to give us some desire of seeing him again. This beginning of sympathy, it is true, may arise towards many people beside him who is to become our friend; and if it goes far enough these are people whom we 'like' or 'would like to be friend with': but my point is that, though it may arise towards other people too, it must arise toward our future friend. As I said, the chief mark of it as yet is the desire to see the person again: we see him again, and each time we find more things attractive in him. With persons whom we merely like, there comes a point when we see things not attractive in them, and therefore they can never be our true frined. With him, the more we see, the more we like, and the more we desire to be with him. We are attracted not only by his face, his voice, his manner, but also by his understanding, his morals, his feelings. The reason of our attraction we shall probable not be able to give: the same or greater merits may be perceived by our intelligence in other persons, whom we never or rarely desire to see; but to him our sympathy goes out.

So far these marks of friendship may exist towards several persons – those whom we commonly call friends, persons with whose tastes we have much in common, and who are not without some (it may be a large) degree of that attractiveness for us, which we may find in some almost worthless persons, and which again may be utterly wanting in others that are very worthy. But the difference between these friends and that perfect friend is so great that they seem really unworthy to be called by the same name. Them we shall not always desire to see; from them we must keep some secrets. But with him we shall desire always to be (sudén kai sunémereuein as Aristotle says): whether talking or silent we shall shew that his presence gives us delight; when we wake in the morning, we shall be satisfied by the sight or the thought or his love; in all our work, his presence or the knowledge of his

delight in us, will give us such sense of completeness, that all our faculties will exert themselves to the utmost. From him we shall have no secrets at all; all that concerns him will be interesting to us; and we shall not scruple to speak to him plainly, what we think, of all those persons and things which may seem to affect him most nearly; it will be impossible for us to wound his prejudice or his pride. Lastly, we shall always prefer his good to our own; we shall always be trying to give him pleasure; and, if need be, shall be eager to die for him.

Such a passion, I think ‘t will be admitted, we can scarcely have for more than one person; if it could be felt even towards two, then those two would have to love one another as well as we loved each of them: and it is very rare to find such a congruence of sympathy. I have been describing friendship throughout on the understanding that it is mutual between the two friends. If it be not, and one have a very strong passion for the other, which is not at all or but little returned; then that man is as far the most miserable of men, as he, whose love is returned, is the happiest. Such a passion, it seems to me, can never really be as strong, as one that is satisfied: for it shews that there is something in the object of love not perfectly sympathetic; his want of love for us, at all events, we cannt love: therefore our love is not perfect. It is this unreturned passion, which Plato and Bacon vituperate as love, saying ´tis intense and not tranquil. Certainly, it is tranquil; it quite prevents the proper exercise of our functions: we are always restless and cannot work for imagining how to win some sign of love from him to whom we give every sign. But it is the unsatisfied desire mixed with this passion, that makes it adverse to tranquillity, not the passion´s own intensity. The intensity is greater where it is returned, but that return establishes an equilibrium, and that equilibrium a tranquillity, desirable because it is full of life: tranquillity in itself is not desirable because it may mean death, and even the painful restless life of unsatisfied passion is better than this. Passion is generally unsatisfied, because it is fixed only on part of the object of it, as his physical qualities – and so is imperfect. In this case it seems best to overcome it by removal from the loved object; or else by imagining that he gives signs of all the love we need; or lastly by trying to cultivate our sympathy for some other person or thing.

It will, I think, now be plain from my description that the passion, with which my paper deals, may be felt equally between either man and woman, man and man, or woman

and woman; and therefore may be called either friendship or love. It will also be plain that both parties must be active and both also passive in all the essential acts of their relation: of those which are unessential one will be active in some, the other in others. I will take an important example. In copulation one party is active, then other passive; and this act has been exaggerated in importance as if in it was exhibited the chief if not the whole of love. I take it, on the other hand, that sexual pruriency is to be very clearly distinguished from that sympathy, which I have laid dwon as the basis of love. It is necessary that this pruriency be indulged for the begetting of children; and, though for a man and woman who truly love one another copulation will be disagreeable, yet they will share this as they share other trials and troubles, alleviating the unpleasantness by the consciousness of their sympathy. But, unfortunately, copulation, like other low pleasures, has attractions for most people: so that they pursue it for its own sake, forgetting the highest pleasure of love, which alone and the means to it they ought to pursue. Hence comes that monstrous unnatural vice of copulating with a woman more often than is necessary for begetting children: hence also sodomy and sapphism, the indulgence of a desire for which, stunts or kills the capability, inborn in every human being, of enjoying the happiness of true love.

I have no time to discuss more of the many points connected with this subject; but I hope that if any others seem important to you, you will not confine the discussion to those noticed in the paper. I will briefly sum up the heads of my treatment. First, by a deductive argument, it is shewn that in love we obtain the highest of human goods. And then it is maintained that such love may be felt for one other human being in a completeness so great as to deserve setting this quite apart, as the one final end of life.