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Mission Impossible? A Scientific Comparison between the Overlapping and Diverging Phenomena of Friendship and Love

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Introduction

Friendship and love concern everyone and form a great part of the social world we live in. Hardly anyone would like to live without friendship or love. There are various kinds of friendship relationships and forms of love, and the meaning of them seems to vary and has varied throughout the history. But what are characteristics of today's friendship and love? Or have opportunist ambitions, cold-hearted calculation, and power issues started to dominate friendships and love as well? As the society has become more and more complicated and circles of life have differentiated, it is more and more difficult to

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Abstract

Everyone needs intimate relationships that provide appreciation, support, recreation, and protection. In addition, these kinds of relationships make effective means of enhancing self-esteem and feelings of mastery and thus promote overall well-being. What are characteristics of today's friendship and love? These issues are analyzed in this article grounding on a vast body of research literature. The differences and similarities between love and friendship are discussed. The salient purpose is to dissect friendship as a form of love and its essence in relation to love and to highlight their significance for the well-being of modern people. The fundamental question is whether both love and friendship can be defined as abilities that can be studied and learned.

find attachment, shared points of interest, and sense of togetherness.

Along with love, friendship is one of the oldest and most fascinating themes in philosophy. Friendship is given an ennobling and enriching meaning in the life span of a human being. Love is considered the basis of human life. Still, the essence of friendship and love is something that seems to run away when trying to define it. Furthermore, in today's world, less and less time is devoted to close and intimate relationships because busy modern people already seem to find it difficult to have enough time for each other. For what are friendship

and love needed eventually and are they even worth all trouble? Is modern friendship and love about benefit or pleasure? What is the difference between love and friendship?

We contemplate these issues in the light of our own studies about the various forms of love and the most recent studies on friendship. First, we dissect the concept of friendship and love. Based on the vast body of research literature and our own previous studies, we analyze the differences and similarities between these two phenomena. Our purpose is to dissect friendship as a form of love and its essence in relation to love.

What is Friendship?

Plato (see Irwin, 1979) and Aristotle (see Sherman, 1993) already contemplated what characteristics a friend has and what friendship is all about. The phrase 'platonic friendship' harks back to Ancient Greek referring to a friendship without any sexual dimension (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). In addition, sociologists have studied friendship abundantly (Bell, 1981). Classic Sociologist Georg Simmel's (1949/1910) studies on sociability and Max Weber's (1980) studies on status and status-bound classification can be considered research that aims at analyzing friendship (Allan, 1989). Also Paul Lazarsfeld (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954) and Robert Merton (1968) analyzed the process of friendship and its meaning in the 1950s.

One of the famous sociologists, Ferdinand Tönnies (1955/1997), tried to, already at the

end of the 19th century, separate friendship from other forms of social behavior. According to him, friendship is less intuitive and more a habit and is based on free selection more than other forms of social behavior (cf. Luhmann, 1986; Melkas, 2003). As friendship is based on free choice, there have to be reasons that encourage building friendship and that make it worth cherishing it. Among others, Herman Schmalenbach (1977/1922) continued with this thought.

All in all, friendship has gotten a whole new meaning in the modern everyday life. "In order to promote the Good society we can use ourselves; our feelings of society in changing society", says Lindgren (2012, p. 23). Therefore, friendship as emotional social phenomenon is also sociologically interesting. Friends are about to take the place of family and relatives in the western culture. People do not tend to ask for help and support from the family but more often from friends; and people seem to spare more so-called quality time for their friends than for their family (Pahl, 2000; Wiseman, 1986).

From the cultural-political perspective, friendship can be seen as a part of communality. Indeed, Lynn Jamieson (1998) deliberates the communal change during the past few decades. The society's responsibility for individuals' needs, security, health, and productivity has been transmitted to the individuals themselves, enterprises, organizations and, for example, schools. People create ethical communities that are based on the relationships between them and

that are criss-crossed and strengthen each other (see Etzioni, 1997). These communities are states of emotional relationships and their stability is affected by shared values and norms, and history. Therefore, friendship can also be seen as a small community that shares the responsibility and helps individuals in problem-solving (Meredyth & Minson, 2007; Orell, 2007).

In psychology, special attention has been paid on the selection of friends (e.g. Van de Bunt, 1999), how friendship is born (e.g. Hallinan, 1979), and what kind of people become friends (Fisher, 1982). There are several theories about the selection of friendship: according to the reinforcement theory, we like people who reinforce us and our behavior (Patterson, 2007) whereas the investment models say that we enjoy being with people who we can benefit (Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette, 2007). Friends share, for example, the same age and similar attitudes and basic values. Friendship offers companionship and support that can be emotional, practical, and material (Allan, 1989). Furthermore, various friendship styles (Matthews, 1986; Wright & Patterson, 2006) and even great differences in expectations and the number of friends during the life span (e.g. Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Knox & Hickson, 2001; Tschann, 1988) have been distinguished.

What is Love?

Freud (1971) considered love as irrational by its essence. Freud did not distinguish irrational love from love that is a manifestation of mature personality. Falling in love is, according to Freud, a sort of abnormal

phenomenon of which lack of the sense of reality and abusiveness are typical. According to the traditional definition of Platonic love, love is directed toward ideas and especially what is good and beautiful is the best form of love. However, one has to develop one's ability to love: first one loves the other one's body but little by little learns to love the beauty that is part of all beautiful bodies. After that, the lover finds out that it is more valuable to love souls than bodies. As the ability to love progresses toward more general things, for example laws and knowledge, the lover will ultimately learn to love the idea of beauty (e.g. Nehamas, 2007).

Love has many definitions and many faces as well (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011b). In addition to romantic love (Beck-Gernsheim & Beck, 1995; Fenchel, 2005; Hatfield, 1988; Hegi & Bergner, 2010; Person, 2007; Sternberg, 1998), there is friendship (Alberoni, 1987; Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Fehr, 1996; Hartup, 1995; Miller & Perlman, 2009), love for fellow humans (Eriksson, 1989; Janako, 1993; Paldanius & Määttä, 2011), mother's and father's love, love of one's country (Määttä, 2006), and pedagogical love (Haavio, 1948; Skinnari, 2004; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011b). In addition, there are countless classifications constructed from the phases or essence of love: Tzeng (1992) has created an octagon model, Shirley (1982) a vector model, Reiss (1960) a circle. Furthermore, there are, for example, a filter theory (Kerchhoff & Davis, 1962), ABCDE-model (Levinger, 1983), balance, exchange, and equilibrium theories (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978).

According to Schelerian thinking (see Solasaari, 2003), a human being is fundamentally an emotional creature. A human being's interest in his or her environment, its phenomena, and object world, as well as within himself or herself, is primarily emotional by nature and only secondarily intellectual or willed. People concentrate on what pleases them and what they value. Scheler calls this outside-directed, intentional, interest love. Love arouses intellectual and logical thinking (Solasaari, 2003). Thus, *ordo amoris*, ranking order created by love, develops. *Ordo amoris* determines people's action, choices, goals, and opportunities—even destiny.

The Difference between Love and Friendship

Given the above-mentioned definitions and categorizations of love and friendship, it seems worth discussing the differences between friendship and love. Friendship might be easy to distinguish from more superficial relationships, such as having a nodding acquaintance with someone or work role-based relationships. But what is the difference between love and friendship?

(1) Friendship develops little by little, in the course of several meetings, and it deepens along with time (Gouldner, 1987; Vittengl & Holt, 2000). On the other hand, falling in love may result from a long-term friendship or working relationship but often falling in love is a totality that does not follow any rules or

laws (Määttä, 2006). Falling in love does not necessarily have any degrees while friendship may have a variety of forms (Allan, 1989).

(2) Love means ecstasy, passion, and torture (Määttä, 2006; Määttä, 2011ac) whereas friendship tries to avoid pain (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Good friendship is not a bed of roses but it can hurt, poison, or restrict (Berndt & Keefe, 1995) and friendship can also involve sorrow and abandonment (Furnham, 1989; Weinstock & Bond, 2000)—yet, friendship is easier than love because it allows distance between friends. Friends look for each other to spend pleasant time together. When being together is unpleasant, friends keep distance for a while to sustain their friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). Life with a loved one, side by side, resembles simultaneously the fascination of love but also is a touchstone. In love, the other's intimacy may become oppressive, clinging, or obsessive, like an addiction (e.g. Bergman, 1995; Capell-Sowder, 1994; Määttä, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2011; Peele, 1988; Person, 2007). In friendship, both have their own space and place and although one could cross the line, it will be only temporary. It is impossible and unnecessary to enter the other's territory. Protecting their individuality does not mean that friends would grow apart from each other but they will have a new chance of becoming closer. This is the secret of the attraction of friendship: friendship is not a declaration or stable fort but it manifests itself as igniting or lingering movements, serene or turbulent currents between two people (Wiseman, 1986).

(3) When one falls in love, a transformation takes place: the one in love is as if he or she was blind and looks at the loved one through rose-tinted glasses (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). In friendship, the other is true; neither does one usually look at the friend through the lenses of one's own hopes and interpretations. However, at the beginning of friendship, one may see the friend in an idealized manner. When friendship becomes deeper and the attachment gets stronger, one starts to accept the friend's negative sides as well. In friendship, one does not have to adjust his or her behavior according to the images or hypothetical expectations caused by the other's proximity. (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). Instead, people can look for their own identity, dimensions, living world, and voice and does not have to take any given role or accept any idealized mold (see Stevens, 2000).

(4) When people fall in love, they are capable of the most talented performances while trying to adjust to those expectations and imaginative needs that they expect their partner to have—as if they had the sixth sense to foresee the other's needs (e.g. Harvey & Pauwels, 2009). This is different in friendship: when being with a friend, one expects the friend to share his or her self-image or, at least, hopes that the friend does not see him or her very differently. One can be oneself without the fear of becoming embarrassed or undermined. Pretending or trying to impress the other does not belong to good friendship (Fehr, 1995). The distance between ideal and reality is quite short in friendship. Earning this kind of intimacy necessitates the development of

mutual trust, reciprocity, and security (Bell, 1981). The paradox of love is that it requires two people to merge into one and still both should hold on to their individuality (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). In good friendship, friends allow each other the freedom to be themselves and become what they possibly can. Thus, friendship is usually more stable and consistent than love because it respects the other's freedom and does not try to mold the other according to one's own preferences. Friendship does not despise, undermine, envy, or nullify but the core of friendship is to want good for the other for him or her, not for one's own happiness. (Allan, 1989.) A friend does not cling, have vested interests. Nor does he or she abandon, but stays, suggests, searches, wonders, wakes up, and guides in a better direction (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996).

(5) Love may be one-sided (Wade, Auer, & Roth, 2009) but friendship is mutual and reciprocal. One can hardly be a friend to someone who he or she does not regard as his or her friend. Maintaining interaction belongs to both friends. The relationship tolerates even a long distance as it can smolder every now and then. Friendship as such does not need any guarantees or promises of eternal permanence (Cramer, 1990). Love and friendship are tested in everyday life and at times of trouble (Hartup, 1994). A friend does not leave alone and abandon but wants to help and support. Still, friendship must be cultivated and it might require effort and bother. Hardships can either deepen or revive friendship—or end it totally.

The Similarity between Love and

Friendship

Although friendship and love have some fundamental differences as was discussed in the previous chapter, they have plenty in common, too. It can be even stated that friendship is an expansion of love: love without friendship is rare, but friendship without love is impossible.

(1) First of all, both love and friendship are difficult to define or study comprehensively. They are something mysterious and inexplicable. Scott Peck (1978) argues that when studying love, we play with a mystery that is too extensive or profound to be explained by words. The scientific language does not always sufficiently illustrate the language of emotions. In love and friendship, emotions touch with the whole scale from the ultimate feelings of joy and ecstasy to the deepest forms of disappointment, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior (see also Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a).

(2) Love and friendship provide people with a variety of positive emotions and resources in life and therefore they both are important for human well-being. At the same time, both love and friendship necessitate action and virtues. (See Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011b.) Friendship and love as forms of social relationships make an important part of human resources (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012b). Good interaction skills, empathy, flexibility, patience, caring, and interest are significant social resources that support the creation and preservation of good and close relationships. People live in the network of human relationships their whole

life. Previously, we have defined love as three-dimensional ability that consists of emotions, acts, and knowledge and skills (see Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011a). If friendship is considered an extension of love, it, too, has to consist of the above-mentioned areas.

(a) Our illustration shows that emotions are part of love and seemingly they are part of friendship, as well. Love as the core of friendship means deep caring for others and it makes life worth living. In other words, love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. Furthermore, love and friendship can be seen as virtues or strengths representing human kindness, compassion, and affection (e.g. Seligman et al., 2005). Yet, there are numerous contemplations whether love is a matter of feeling or deciding. Even Kant (in *Doctrine of Virtue*) defined love as a matter of feeling on the one hand and on the other hand there are duties of love to other people (see e.g. Fahmy, 2010). Our viewpoint is that emotions that are connected to love are positive and good-producing as such, for example feelings of joy and pleasure and the sense of togetherness and security. These are emotions that friendship provides, too.

(b) Secondly, love is manifested through acts and similar acts are needed in cherishing friendship. Crisp (2010) points out that it is not enough to know what to do but also to act accordingly. In this sense, care and love involved in friendship can and should be manifested in practice. Both love and friendship mean closeness that arouses from communication and exchange of thoughts.

Friendship and love are experienced by asking, listening, empathizing, and protecting. Storh (2009, p. 136) concludes: “My flourishing depends on the flourishing of others. That makes it all the more important to permit wise intervention in others’ affairs, for in minding others’ business, we are also often minding our own”. Friendship is a multidimensional phenomenon where friends can be close to and support each other without being selfish or asking for return gifts.

(c) In addition to emotions and acts, knowledge and skills that are essential in love are also essential in friendship. Such skills are, for example, knowing and paying attention to not only others but also oneself, problem-solving skills, and interaction and negotiation skills. It is worth noticing that these skills are also achievable to any ordinary person. Therefore, this kind of interpretation supports the idea that love and friendship are controllable and voluntary virtues that can be learned. It seems that skills and knowledge that are needed in friendship are also achievable and learnable and it can be understood through concepts such as “minding others’ business (Storh, 2009)” and “minding the close relationship (Harvey & Pauwels, 2009).”

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) studied the model of adult attachment through the person’s internal model of the self (positive or negative) and the person’s internal model of others (positive or negative) and found attachment patterns in friendship that varied according to the dimensions of avoidance and dependency.

Indeed, ability to build trust and experience intimacy depends on their capacity to share feelings, thoughts, and desires and to develop an affective bond with a friend (see Bauminger et al., 2008).

(3) Not only is friendship valuable among women and men (see Hall, 2011) and different races (see Shelton, Richeson, & Bergsieker, 2009) but also across human life span. Friendship is important in childhood and adolescence (see Bauminger et al., 2008; Dwyer et al., 2010; Zimmermann, 2004) and in adulthood (see Romano et al., 2009; Welch & Houser, 2010) but with different emphases—sometimes for benefit, sometimes for pleasure, and sometimes it is even similar to a some sort of exchange relationship. Likewise, love is equally important in every phase of life from childhood and adolescence to adulthood (Määttä 2010, 2011b) and in senior age (Määttä, 2011a; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012a). The basic need for love and friendship does not seem to disappear along aging although the means of fulfilling these needs may vary. Becoming accepted and the need to love and receive love are undeniable and natural regardless of age, health, or gender.

4) Individuality and differences in ways of expression set their own challenge at the expression of love and friendship. One cannot just concentrate on the information given by the other—friendship also gives room for silence, the space where language is not enough or necessary. The question is also about dialogue although words cannot always describe the reality. Still, questions are needed

when trying to create room for genuine discussion and openness (Cramer, 1990). Previously, we showed how difficult it is to maintain individuality in love while it is easier in friendship. Yet, individuality and the possibility to become accepted as is are essential both in love and in friendship. It has been shown that life without love and friendship is miserable (Solano, 1986) because they both are important to individuals' self-respect (Voss, Markiewics, & Doyle, 1999).

Discussion

Everyone needs intimate relationships which provide appreciation, support, recreation, and protection. Positive social relationships, such as friendship, bring other benefits, too. It is an effective means of enhancing self-esteem and feelings of mastery (Rousseau, Salek, Aubé, & Morin, 2009) and thus promotes for example success in other areas of life, such as work (see e.g. Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011a).

Meyers (2008, p. 244) uses the term "practical sympathy" that is not a feeling but, according to our interpretation, merely the ability to understand what it feels like to be in another person's situation. This kind of sympathy gives people and their actions moral worth. The core question is, from this point of view, "what should one do" instead of "what should one feel". Like love, also friendship can be regarded as a decision that is manifested by acts. Furthermore, love at the core of friendship is not about just an affect or a passive inner emotion but active aspiration to help the beloved, the friend in this case, to grow and be happy (Fromm, 1977). Good

friends make each other flourish. The friend helps to choose the right direction, gives life force, and new perspectives—one does not see enough if alone! Therefore, friendships are invaluable even in today's ruthless and busy life. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991, p. 242): "a challenge for future research is to explore empirically how attachment patterns are externalized, maintained, and revised in interaction with the social environment." In this article, we have dissected friendship as an extension of love. Moreover, we have contemplated whether friendship could be regarded as ability similarly as we think love is fundamentally a matter of ability to love.

To further Bartholomew's and Horowitz's thought about the direction of research, we argue that in the modern world of busyness and self-centeredness, it would be necessary to study and learn the ability to love and be a friend. It seems obvious that people cannot cope without intimate and loving relationships—both platonic and non-platonic love relationships—but the modern era necessitates new approaches to finding means to create, cherish, and act in these relationships as the time people have for their loved ones has decreased considerably. What does this tendency mean for human well-being? Considering love and friendship as abilities may provide a way of reconsidering these invaluable areas of life. Even if the essence of these two may have become more obscure, it is still worth highlighting their importance in human well-being. Inevitably, we live in a network of social relationships, and yet true

love and friendship are not obviousness but they require conscious attention or “tender loving care”—is this what the ability to love is all about?

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