

THE IDEA OF FRIENDSHIP

*Habits of the Heart,
Individualism and Commitment in American Life*

Robert N. Bellah, et al
Harper & Row, 1985, p. 115

<https://dokumen.pub/habits-of-the-heart-individualism-and-commitment-in-american-life-newnbsped-0520205685-9780520205680.html#:~:text=Friends%20must%20enjoy%20one%20another's%20company%2C%20they,seems%20slightly%20out%20of%20place%20in%20a>

It is worth remembering that the traditional idea of friendship had three essential components. Friends must enjoy one another's company, they must be useful to one another, and they must share a common commitment to the good. Today we tend to define friendship most in terms of the first component: friends are those we take pleasure in being with. To us the issue of usefulness seems slightly out of place in a relationship that should above all be free and spontaneous, though we are quite aware of the importance of being "friendly" to those who are potentially useful to us.

"What we least understand is the third component, shared commitment to the good, which seems to us quite extraneous to the idea of friendship. In a culture dominated by expressive and utilitarian individualism, it is easy for us to understand the components of pleasure and usefulness, but we have difficulty seeing the point of considering friendship in terms of common moral commitments.

"For Aristotle and his successors, it was precisely the moral component of friendship that made it the indispensable basis of a good society. For it is one of the main duties of friends to help one another to be better persons: one must hold up a standard for one's friend and be able to count on a true friend to do likewise. Traditionally, the opposite of a friend is a flatterer, who tells one what one wants to hear and fails to tell one the truth."