The Intricate and Varied Dances of Friendship I: Turnings and Types

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> The ultimate touchstone of friendship is not improvement neither of the other nor of the self. The ultimate touchstone is witness, the privilege of having been seen by someone and the equal privilege of being granted the sight of the essence of another, to have walked with them and to have believed in them, and sometimes to have just accompanied them for however brief a span on a journey impossible to accomplish alone. David Whyte, From *Consolations*

Human being are social animals (Aronson, xxx) who operate with socially-oriented brains (Denworh, 2020, pp.120-122). Their survival for many centuries as slow and weak inhabitants of the African Savannah was dependent on their collaboration. In her essay on loneliness, Lynn Darling (2020) has summed it up this way: "Our earliest ancestors were sociable creatures—they had to be. Those on the own were vulnerable to attack, easy pickings for hungry predator." The newborn infants were the most vulnerable. Protection of these fragile newborn children required a sharing of childrearing responsibilities. Yet another factor has been identified which pushed humans on the Savannah to collaborate: food was best gathered by a group of people rather than by individuals. Large animals were killed and butchered by tribes not a family. Foraging was best done by well-organized, communicating and educating teams rather than by an individual wandering around randomly and ignorantly in search of nutrients.

To seal the deal and truly identify human beings as uniquely social animals we need only point to the large amount of oxytocin in our hormonal system (complemented by endorphins, dopamine and serotonin). Alongside a few highly gregarious rodents and primates (such as the widely studied prairie voles and African baboons), we are saturated with this bonding and nurturing neurochemical. We are geared toward "tend and befriend"—as well as the much better known "fight, flight and freeze". Our aggressive self doesn't play second fiddle to our tending self—in fact these fundamental instincts often intermix, especially when we, as human beings, are threatened: "Don't mess with my kid!"

In not playing second fiddle and holding its own, the instinct to tend and befriend comes with its own rewards—and not just the reward of surviving for another day. As Lydia Denworth notes, human beings form social bonds that are inherently gratifying. She writes of ". . . the good feeling that friendship generates in humans." (Denworth, 2020, p. 132) I would take this identification of friendship benefits a step further. Friendships help us gain a clearer sense of self and the diverse ways in which we generate and manifest ourselves.

Denworth (2020, p. 210) quotes the novelist Edith Wharton regarding this benefit: "There is one friend in the life of each of us who seems not a separate person, however dear and beloved, but an expansion, an interpretation, of one's self, the very meaning one's soul." Friendships may even provide us with a richly textured yet coherent sense of reality. In the midst of our friendships, we are creating an expanding narrative regarding the world in which we live—a narrative that moves beyond that which we received from our own family. I will be attending to and expanding on these higher-order benefits of

friendships throughout this essay and the companion essay. Put simple, friendship does just exist at the bottom of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970); it is to be found motivating and guiding our priorities and actions at all levels of this hierarchy.

Turnings: Shifting Shape and Function of Friendships Over a Lifetime

Among the many kinds of relationships in which we are engaged – and which we need for our own sanity and survival—there is friendship. Denworth (2020, p. 8) makes the case:

> For both humans and animals, to be social is to behave in a way that affects another being. That behavior can be positive or negative. It can be subtle and small-a glance or a touch or a whisper. It can be big and booming and brawny, like a physical attack or a loud declaration. It can be anything in between. If primates, which, of course, includes us, are specialized for anything, it's social behavior. We are gregarious. In scientific terms, that doesn't mean we all swing from the chandeliers or host never-ending parties, it simply means we are social creatures. We have always lived in groups and as those groups got bigger and more complex, we had to figure out how to navigate them and get along with one another. We had to know how to read emotions and recognize allies. As a group, we had to work out how to communicate, find food, and defend ourselves against predators. We had to learn to cooperate. As individuals, we had to know whom we could rely on in tough times and relax with in quiet times. In other words, we had to have friends.

Over the many centuries of existence and evolution on this planet, we as human beings have certainly turn to our family and relatives for care and assistance. We have also turned to our friends. It is especially during our adolescent years and during the last several decades of life that we are most beholding to our friends. While family is particularly important during our middle years, friendship play a central role during our adolescent years as a source of learning, socialization and support.

When we grow older, we tend to have fewer friends, but the friendship we do have become increasingly important (especially with the death of close family members). This curvilinear relationship (Denworth, 2020, p. 245) regarding the increasing, then decreasing, then increasing important of friendships speaks to the important shifts that tend to occur in the role played by friendships over a lifetime. These shifts are sometimes identified (poetically) as the *Turnings* of friendships in life (Denworth, 2020, p. 141)

Developmental Stages and Friendship

We dance with our friends in different ways as we grow older. It is not only a matter of the number and importance of friendships. The curvilinear shift upward and downward in friendship saliency provides only one of the turnings that typically occur in our friendships. In borrowing (and quoting) from the social neuroscience perspective of John Cacioppo and Gary Berntson, Lydia Denworth (2020, p. 80) proposes that these turnings often involve an intermixing of physiological changes in our bodies and shifting social expectations and needs on our part over time:

> The brain does not exist in isolation but rather is a fundamental- component of developing and aging individuals who themselves are mere actors in the larger theater of life. This theater is undeniably social, beginning with prenatal care, mother-infant attachment, and early childhood experiences and ending with loneliness or social support and with familial or societal decisions about care for the elderly.

Much of this integrative social-neuroscience perspective is captured in the field of developmental psychology (though until recently the evolving brain was sometimes ignored). Led by Erik Erikson (1963), psychologists have long proposed that we human beings engaged a series of developmental challenges during our lifetime that are both physiological and social in nature. Furthermore, our 'Turnings" are frequent and somewhat predictable (at least within specific societies). We change and develop not only as a function of aging, but also as a function of shits in the perspectives and practices of the social system in which we live and work.

Developmental Perspectives

Many of these challenges concern our relationship with other people—beginning with the foundational challenge of trusting other people. Unlike the developmental models that focus on the maturation of our thought processes (based on the theories of Piaget), the models offered by Erikson (1963) and other Ericksonians leave us moving forward to the next developmental stage even when we have not done a very good job of mastering challenges associated with our current stage. Thus, we are moving on from the first stage of Trust, even if we have not found ourselves as young infants in a trustful environment. Like the psychoanalysts, Erikson believes that early childhood experiences have a major lifelong impact on our sense of self and our relationships with other people.

We must move to Erikson's fourth stage (Industry vs. Inferiority) when focusing specifically on friendships that exist outside our immediate family sphere—but must acknowledge that unsatisfactory resolution of previous stage challenges is still at play. Thus, if we have not been able to find autonomy as a young child and instead live with a sense of shame and personal doubt, then we are likely to find ourselves establishing friendships later in life that lack appropriate boundaries and incline toward dysfunctional dependency.

If we have successfully been able to find initiative (stage three) then during early adolescence, we are expected to find ourselves not just getting out into the world, but also engaging in constructive activities (industry). Alternatively, we feel inferior and incapable of being successful in doing anything of importance in our young life. As I will note shortly, friendships are often initiated and sustained through engagement on shared projects. During adolescence, this shared project might involve joining one's friends on a sports team or musical group. We might join an interest group at school or simply join with our friends on the Internet building a fictious city together or do battle against evil digital forces. The main thing is that we feel capable of engaging in the project and find good reason to forge friendships on behalf of this project.

Conversely, if we are feeling inferiority and incapable of being productive during our late childhood and early adolescent years, then we likely to rely on other people for support and guidance—including other people of our own age. It might go even further. If we have not done a very good job in later childhood (stage three) of getting out into the world (initiative) then we are likely also to have "failed to launch" our relationships with people outside of our family. Our dependency remains with our family and we find few friends outside this isolated (and often isolating) home constellation.

Forging Our identity and Establishing Intimacy

For the Eriksonians, the direct challenges of friendship take place during our late adolescent years and our early adult years. It is during these years that we forge our identity and begin to discover the role we will play in our society. This identify formation is often (even usually) done in conjunction with our

friends. While parents and siblings help us shape our initial sense of self during earlier years in our life, it is when we go out into the world and "hang around" young people who are not members of our immediate family that we get a clearer sense of who we "are" in relationship to other people.

Theory of Mind

Psychologists (especially those with a psychoanalytic bent) often describe the infant's sense of reality as being "narcissistic" with the young child being unable to distinguish their own reality from the reality outside themselves. From this preliminary "primary narcissism", the child moves to a family-centric sense of reality: the world is centered in and defined by their family life—even if this life is highly dysfunctional. It is during one's adolescent years that one encounters and engages with alternative perspectives held by people outside one's family. Psychologists now write about a "theory of mind" that tends to develop both during our years inside the family and during years outside the family. We begin to recognize that there are differing ways to view the world and that these differing perspectives can lead to differing decisions and actions—that are justifiable. We acquire a "theory of mind" that enables us interact with and learn from people who differ from us.

Denworth (2020, p. 6) frames it this way. As children we glance at one another when playing a game together. We notice what the other child is up to, sometimes imitating, sometimes grabbing. At this age, Denworth suggests that children:

> . . . are not yet cognitively capable of full differentiating themselves from others or taking someone else's perspective. But they're on their way. That emerging capacity is called theory of mind. It is the landmark social development of the toddle years that allows young children to have friends.

It is during these formative years of adolescence that we not only form a theory of mind, but also a clearer sense of self. Actually, as the esteemed psychiatrist, Harry Stack Sullivan has noted, we gain a clearer sense of the multiple selves we establish in our relationship with other people (Sullivan, 1953a). One of Sullivan's proteges, Patrick Mullahy, has declared: "it is not a person as an isolated and self-contained entity that one is studying, or can study, but a situation, an interpersonal situation, composed of two or more people." (Sullivan, 1953b, p. 245) Our sense of self shifts as the interpersonal situations in which we find ourself tends to shift.

By moving outside our immediate family and forming friendships, we discover that we are multiple selves when interacting with friends who differ from one another as well as differing from us. If we attend public school then we are "forced" to interact with other students who come from different socio-economic levels as well as different races and ethnic backgrounds. Multiple religions are represented, as are a wide range of political beliefs and cultural artifacts (such as clothing, makeup, body adornments and dialect). This diversity might decrease when attending a private school or a church-related school—and parents often chose to send their children to these more "sheltered" schools precisely because they are fearful of public-school diversity.

Friends as Anchors on a Stormy Sea

Our friends represent the anchor in our life—a life that is a storm of seeming betrayal, conformity and false truths. During these formative years in which there is significant physical growth and maturation, we are flooded with hormones that readily trigger emotions and poor judgements (Brezedine, 2006;

Brezedine, 2011). Our critical thinking skills are housed primarily in the prefrontal cortex which is not fully in operation (especially for men) until the mid-20s. In a head-to-head battle between our head (prefrontal cortex) and heart (limbic system), the heart will always win at least until we are in our late 20s. All of this means, that reality and the emotions associated with reality are formed and reinforced during our late teens and early 20s by our equally-as-distracted friends. We live in a state of emotional reactivity with our "heart on our sleeves." (Denworth, 2020, p 106) We find that life is defined primarily in relationship to some very important people in our life—and they often reside outside our family system.

There are important cognitive challenges that accompany the significant emotional challenges we face during these early adult years. In his study of moral and epistemological maturity, William Perry (xxx) finds that adolescents (college students) tend to manage the emotional and cognitive storms in their life by placing everything in a dualistic framework. There is only right and wrong, true and false. People wear white hats and black hats. There is legitimate authority and illegitimate authority.

Under conditions of emotional turmoil, it is essential we make things simple—and this includes the ways in which we classify the people with whom we interact. Are they friends or foes? Are they believers or those who have been led astray? It is not only a matter of hanging around the "right" people. It is also a matter of collectively defining the truth with our friends. "With a little help from our friends" we create a Bubble of Belief that shields us from the "others" in our life and makes our stormy internal world a little more tranquil.

Shattered Reality

Unfortunately, this Bubble of Belief and our dualistic frame is not always strong enough to fortify us from all sources of information and all versions of reality. We hear and see things that contradict our beliefs, leading us to question all truths and all versions of reality. William Perry (1970) uses the label "multiplicity" to identify this troubling epistemological stance. There are multiple truths, multiple rules of conduct and, ultimately, multiple versions of reality.

If this is what our world "really" looks like, then we are left to make our own decisions and this often means to be expedient and opportunistic. "Do what you need to do in order to get ahead." "Don't trust any authority, but do trust the power of money and position in society." We see this multiplistic perspective being dominant among young people at various times in the history of many societies. As young people, we try to escape this challenge of multiplicity by "hanging out" with a small group of people who look and think just like we do. In these "tribal" settings, there is only one self and a rigid identity is formed.

Multiplicity will infuse our friendships during this period of time in our life. In some instances, other "disenfranchised" young adults will join with us to forge an identity that diverges from that of those who are in charge and purport to be authorities. The rigid sense of self we form is often founded on what the Ericksonians call a "negative identity." As an adolescent we become "rebels (without a cause)" who don't know what we want to be, but do know what we DON'T want to be. We don't want to be like our parents or like "main stream" America.

We chose to be "hippies" or Goths. We wear black because we don't like white; we listen to loud dissonant music because "soft" music represents the establishment. We don't trust authority because we feel betrayed by those we had hoped to trust in our childhood or are adolescence. Together with our

friends, we forge an identity that—ironically--is still beholding to the dominant norms of society—though now we are conforming by doing the opposite of what we are "supposed" to do. At the core of this collective multiplistic stance is a belief there are no enduring truths in the world. For these estranged youth there are multiple truths that are based on quests for money, power and/or social status. The golden rule becomes "those who have the gold are those who rule."

There is another group of young multiplists who also embrace this alternative version of the golden rule. For these young people, truth is a commodity to be exchanged for some ulterior purpose. We do what we need to do in order to get ahead. As a young adult, we cozy up to our boss, learn how to "play the game" and fit very nicely into the dominant social network. I remember as a young man talking to a classmate who spent a considerable amount of time playing golf. I asked him why this was a priority. He indicated that he wanted to skillful enough as a golfer to always loss a game of golf by a few strokes when on the course with his future boss or clients. For this young man, the world of business that lay in front of him is nothing more or less than a set of interactions on a golf course. He joins with other opportunists (and rebels) in considering life to be "just a game" with no transcendent purpose.

Commitments and Intimacy

Whether one is a rebel or opportunist during these multiplist years, the role played by friends is critical. There is still the lingering dualism. The world is now framed as one in which there is truth and righteousness, or as one where anything goes. If the latter is the case, then we are likely to trust only a few people (often not members of our family, for they led us to believe that there are enduring truths and there is a right way to behave). One can only count on a friend who belongs in the same tribe. This tribe provides the only version of reality that one can trust in the midst of competing truths and codes of conduct. This tribal-based reality is worth fighting for and even dying for—as represented dramatically in theatrical productions such as *West Side Story*.

This depth of commitment to friends during the challenging years of adolescence can often be great. It can even be intimate in nature. Not intimate with regard to sexual activity, but intimate with regard to sharing of personal hopes, dreams and fear. This intimacy that is manifest in a search for support and comfort during moments of stress and distress. The relationship with a friend becomes an intimate sanctuary that provides safety and renewal in the midst of stormy existential despair.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1953a) even suggests that we learn about and experience intimacy in our adolescent relationships with friends ("chums") rather than in our relationships with the people we are dating. Sulllivan (1953b, p. 145) makes this observation:

> .   . . it is a specific new type of interest in a particular member of the same sex who becomes a chum or a close friend. . .[An adolescent] begins to develop a real sensitivity to what matters to another person. And this is not in the sense of "what should I do to get what I want" but instead "what should I do to contribute to the happiness or to support the prestige and feeling of worth-whileness of my chum.

We might learn about sexuality in the back seat of a car, but learn about intimacy in the corner booth of a fast-food restaurant where we meet with our best friend every afternoon after school. We care enough about our chum that we will learn about their interests and help them feel good about themselves—and this required a theory of mind. Thus, it is that friendships forged during adolescence are often major sources of our personal insights regarding both identity and intimacy. We are assisted

by (and perhaps fully dependent on) our friends in fending off Erikson's role confusion while gaining a sense of personal identity.

Empathy and Support

We can now return to the theory of mind. It is during the adolescent years that the theory of mind becomes the capacity for empathy (Denworth, 2020, p. 61). Within the context of our friendships, we can share feeling, match our friend's behavioral states, and both recognize and appreciate the feelings of our friend. Most importantly, we are motivated to do something about our friend's suffering. In essence, as Denworth (2020, p. 61) has concluded: "empathy of any sort begins with something very fundamental: the ability to know where you end and another individual begins. It requires a sense of self." I would suggest that this can be quite challenging if we are gaining our sense of self from the relationship we have established. If our friend is hurting then are we also hurting since we remold our self within a relationship? Are we wounded along with our friend—and, frankly, is the whole world hurting when my friend and I are engaged in some attempt to heal (one another)> Denworth (2020, pp. 61-62) identifies the emotional contagion that can occur in a friendship. Is this inevitable—especially when we are living through our emotionally-charged teenage and early adult years?

It is "with a little help from our friends" that we gain a sense of empathy—and learn about intimacy. It is during our adolescent years that we forge this capacity to be empathetic and intimate. It is during these critical years that we seek to avoid Erikson's alternative—which is isolation (and loneliness). In the midst of the 21st Century, with many young people remaining in their bedroom living vicariously in a digital world of avatars and alternative realities that the formation of real, in-person friendships might be particularly important. Role confusion and isolation might be endemic to our digital world and friendship might be the cure. While Artificial Intelligence might threaten to rule the world, it can't replace the genuine, caring relationship established among friends in the corner booth.

Building our Career

Erikson suggests that our early years of adulthood are primarily concerned with building a family (for those in traditional relationships) and building one's career (for those in the middle class). Furthermore, the Ericksonians often propose that there are not enough hours in the day to fully meet all of these expectations regarding family and career. A tension often exists for the young adult about establishing and balancing priorities. In some cases, in recent years, this has meant forgoing or at least deferring the formation of an enduring, intimate relationship with another person and starting a family with them.

What then about friends. If we don't have time for family or encounter major pressure at work, then how in the world do we find time for friends? The answer often is that our friendships are established at work and are often wrapped around projects in the workplace or at home. Sigmund Frued is reported to have said that satisfaction in life is based on love and work. Perhaps, the greatest opportunity for satisfaction in life comes when love (or at least friendship) is interwoven with work (Smelser and Erikson, 1980).

New Neighborhoods

Several studies in recent years have left us wondering if Americans have "stopped hanging out" together. It began with Robert Putnam's original 1995 essay (called "bowling alone") on the loss of American culture (Putnam, 2000) and has received recent attention in Derek Thompson's (2024) essay

on loneliness. We find even greater evidence of this growing estrangement in Japan, where many citizens (especially those that are young) remain at home and interact with other people only via digital modes. While there is good reason to be concerned about this reticence to hang out with other people, it is also important to note that new neighborhoods are being formed that closely relate to the matter of career building.

In recent years, our "neighborhoods" are often established not at the location of our home or physical community, but in the location of our work. Large corporations, for instance, often provide lunch service, lounges for coffee breaks and even recreational facilities (e.g. basketball courts). The workplace facilities are now identified as "campuses"—complete with carefully-groomed areas in which to walk and perhaps even a pond or gazebo for escape and contemplation. One can establish friendships in such a setting—especially given the shared set of values and career interests among those working on this "campus." With long hours away from home, it is fully understandable that one would look for their "neighborhood" and the accompanying friendships at work.

There is also the matter of time spent at home. With the Internet readily available, one can stay connected with and engage in work related activities with our workplace friends. Our partner has gone to bed or are on their own computer connecting with their workplace friends. If we do have children, they are sent off to bed. While in the "old days" we would be watching TV with our partner, it is now often the case that we would prefer our workplace friends to an evening of ½ hour comedies, reality TV or late-night talk shows.

Aside from our workplace friends, there are those people in our life who accompany us at what Robert Bellah and his associates (1985) identify as "life style enclaves." During the weekend we might attend a political rally or drive our antique car to a gathering of fellow car-lovers. We might meet other film-buffs at the local movie theater every Tuesday evening for the showing of some 1930s movie. How about a gathering of fellow weavers or quilters at a 21st Century equivalent to the old sowing or quilting bees. We find in the contemporary creation of these life style enclaves the formation of a new type of "neighborhood" and the establishment of new sources of friendship that resides alongside the workplace neighborhood.

Functional and Faux Friendships

While the workplace and life style neighborhoods can be the source of many friendships, I would suggest that there is a third source of early adulthood friendships. I find in my own life (and in the life of many friends) that I began joint projects with other people that some evolved into strong and enduring friendships that remained in place following completion of the project. I co-author books with men and women who soon become friends. We share the collaborative effort or writing the book and share the joy of accomplishment when we finish and publish the book.

As in the case of many other "ambitious" and productive people in my life, I find that there is a "perfect storm" when shared intimacy and shared creation come together. One of my colleagues and I can give birth to our own "baby" without being in a sexually intimate relationship. WE become friends in the midst of our "labor." As psychoanalysts such as Anna Freud (1992) have noted, we can "sublimate" our sexual and procreative desires by joining with a dear friend in creating something together. "Many years ago, Anna's father, Sigmund Frued, suggested that life wraps around two primary motives: love and

work. Erik Erikson (Smelser and Erikson, 1980) seemed to have agreed. These two motives can come together with a joint project.

Before leaving this era of early adulthood friendships to be found at work, in life style enclaves and in the midst of joint projects, we should at least acknowledge that there are "faux" friendships that hop on the back of the strong career ambitious that are often found to prevail in our early (and middle adulthood. We create opportunistic friendships. Friends" are formed so that we might do some social status climbing. I am reminded of a scene in Frank Loesser's *How to succeed in Business Without Trying*. An ambitious young man (J. Pierrepont Finch) finds that the aging head of his company attended the same college ("Old Ivy") as he did. He makes full use of this shared affiliation (a version of life style enclave) to endear himself to this leader. Together with others in his company, J. Pierrepont also sings a song that suggests there is no such thing as social status ("Brotherhood of Man")—though he is fully engaged in climbing up the ladder of social status and ensuring that he will be successful in business without really trying.

I find this type of faux friendship swirling around my own life and work. I witnessed this kind of friendship during the many years when I was conducting workshops or delivering keynote speeches at some conference. I often found that a new "dear" friend was hanging around me and always sitting with me at lunch or dinner. They would praise my work and ask me to join them in conducting some project. A "true" friend of mine suggested that these "new friends" were hanging on ropes strung around my neck. There I was, traveling through my own career with the burden of "hanging with friends." I gained little from these faux friendships—other than perhaps the ego-gratification that comes with being "admired." I often challenge myself not only about what I have gained from these false friendships, but also about the extent to which I forged faux friendships in my own early career with those who had already "made it" and were of higher social status in the academic and professional service world in which I dwelled.

Mid-life Crisis

Considerable attention was drawn during the last three decades of the 20th Century to the matter of challenges confronted during the middle decades of our life (Gould, 1979; Levinson and Associates, 1978; Sheehy, 1996; Levinson,1997). It is during our late 40s and early 50s that we confront what Eliott Jaques (1965) coined "the mid-life crisis." Issues that were set on hold during our 30s and early 40s no longer can be avoided. Voices from other rooms in our psyche (Capote, 1994: Yong, Warrier and Bergquist, 2021) are now louder and demanding of corrective action. We find that dreams dismissed during our 20s are coming to the fore again and wish to be honored (Bergquist, 2012). I often use the metaphor of a psychological rubber band that is being stretched out further and further in our late 40s until it snaps—as which time we become depressed, increase use of alcohol or mind-altering drugs, get a divorce, change jobs, or simply do more daydreaming.

There is also the deep existential matter of now viewing life from today until our death, rather than from birth to today. Our aches and pains remind us that we are mortal, as does the decline and even death of our parents. This lingering sense of limitations in life often leaves us with grief associated with not only the failure to achieved our once-hoped-for goals but also the failure to be the loving spouse and devoted parent that we had once thought we could be. This is a time when we question our values, actions we have taken (or not taken) and important relationships that have been squandered.

This is also a time when we are inclined to shift our attitude about friendships, and look to new kinds of relationships in our life. We question the priority we have assigned to certain friendships and the priorities we have assigned to relationships that lacked any long-term meaning. As a result of this critical reflection, we might simply become more selective in our friendships and spend more time with a small group of friends. The new friends or re-structure old friendships will often become deeper as we turn to our fellow mid-lifers for support, suggestions and simply a sympathetic listening ear.

Our selective friends are on their own developmental journey and we often will hold each other's hand as we journey together through the rugged and often dancing landscape (Miller and Page, 2007) of mid-life. I know in my early 50s, there was a colleague with whom I had worked closely during my 40s in the introduction and management of projects in American postsecondary education. Now, as both of us entered our 50s, there was a new focus. We would get together at his home in California or my home in Maine to talk deep into the night about our changing lives, about our relationships with wives and children, and about old aspirations that will never be realized and aspirations from earlier in our life that have re-emerged.

Friendships for the two of us and for many other people were no longer instrumental in nature. There was no longer a shared workplace or even shared projects. There was now much deeper and lingering shared life experiences (only some of which related to work we had done together). We talked more about special meals we had shared or a beautiful setting in which we held a conference or workshop than we talked about the events or outcomes of this conference or workshop. We reflected on a remarkable relationship we had both had with another colleague or about our comparable struggles with making sense of and finding meaning in our new life as "Mid-Centurians." We played songs about growing older (especially from Frank Sinatra's *September Song* album) and read novels about mid-life protagonists (such as John Updike's series of books about the middle-class everyman Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom (Updike, 1996), or John Irving's *The World According to Garp* (2021)).

Old Age

The curvilinear trajectory of friendships is fully at play when we enter the final decades of our life. As Denworth (2020, p. 233) observers:

> Earlier in life, being married—that relationship—is really key, but as you get older friendships become that much more important and whether or not you're married is relatively less important. . . . Even if you lose a spouse, friendships can sustain you. And you can keep making new friends throughout your life.

It is at this moment in our life that a troubling paradox often appears. Friendships become more important; however, friends become less available and we are vulnerable to isolation and loneliness.:

> . . . [Y]ou have to have someone handy to hug. The compounded risk of loneliness in old age cannot be ignored. Once people retire, the lose regular interaction with colleagues. . . . With increasing age, it's more likely you will lose a spouse and friends start to die as well. (Denworth, 2020, p. 241)

Various forms of infirmity can force us to stay at home and we might simply not have the energy to go out looking for new friends. Yet, they are of increasing importance. This is indeed a paradox that can be injurious to our physical and mental health. We do need hugs—but it goes even deeper.

Ego Integrity and Loss

Erik Erikson (Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick, 1986) proposed that the primary developmental challenge of later life is to find what he called "ego integrity" in the midst of a pull toward despair. I would suggest that part of the pull toward despair has to do with the loss of dear friends (as well as members of one's own family). It is during the last years of life that we experience unwanted loss of people in our life rather than the freely chosen increase in relationships or purposeful dropping off of relationships. My own mother spoke often and emotionally of the loss of friends as she entered her late 80s and early 90s (along with the loss of husband in her mid-80s.

If our sense of self and even our sense of reality is informed (perhaps even established) in our interaction with other important people in our life, than the integrity of our ego is certainly challenged by the death of these important people. Left alone and facing our own death, we are facing a swirling, unanchored reality concerning who we "really" are after a long life of changing and sometimes contradictory selves and after living in a world that is now radically different (yet someone the same) as the world in which we were born.

On the more positive side, some would say that it is during the last years of our life that we are most likely to come to some deeper sense of our self. Carl Jung (1931a), like Erik Erikson believes that it is during these final years that we can achieve an integrated sense of self in which once blocked elements of our psyche come to the surface and intermix with long prevalent elements of our self. Jung writes about our masculine (animus) and feminine (anima) "spirits"—one of which usually remains under cover (Jung, 1978). They both can flourish during our late life. As a man I can become more "feminine" (more oriented toward relationships) and as a woman I become more independent (less beholding to other people) (Chodorow, 1999).

In later life, we can also let down our public mask (persona) and let those elements of our psyche that are less beholding to traditional expectations (shadow) come to the surface. Without the restricted version of reality found in relationships, we are allowed to view the unique convergencies of life—what Jung (1931b) called the synchronicities in our world. With this new sense of reality and with less public restraints imprisoning us, we can become more "eccentric." Old age allows us to finally "dress in purple" and dance alone (Yong, Warrier and Bergquist, 2021).

This "freed" sense of self, of course, is reserved for those of us who find some economic freedom and later life and spend time in relatively good health. We are more likely to live in despair when we are poor and constantly face illness and a fragile body. We are dependent on other people to find food and shelter. Health care and social service workers become our most frequent companions. We forfeit any sense of self in order to remain alive. On Abraham Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of need we return to the lowest level of survival when looking for relationships with other people. This, in turn, requires that we also return to Erikson's first stage of development: we must trust the intentions and competencies of other people on whom we are beholding. Thus, as I have noted throughout this section, the nature of our friendships and our need for friendship change over time during our (hopefully) long life journey.

Friendships that Change Yet Enduring

As I have noted, many of our friendships change over time. Some of our friendships drop off over time. These are usually gradual changes and the loss of connection takes place slowly over time. These changes and losses are especially likely to occur with people who no longer remain in our same

workplace neighborhood or in our same physical community. We live in what xxx has called a "temporary society" and often live with temporary relationships.

My Adult Chum: Enduring Male Friend

Some friendships remain in place throughout a lifetime. They might shift with the development stages engaged by each friend, but there is a core set of shared perspectives and core commitments that remain in place. In the case of an enduring friendship in my own life, I can point to my fifty-year relationship with Gary Quehl. This relationship was initially instrumental. I worked as a consultant with Gary when he was head of a small college consortium in New York State. It all began when Gary and I as young (ambitious) men were attending a higher education conference at the Wingspread Center in Wisconsin.

Staying overnight at a nearby Holiday Inn, Gary and I were having drinks at a very noisy Holiday Inn bar. In the midst of this noise, Gary mentioned that he was initiating a development program for faculty at his colleges and was planning to engage a specific set of tools that focus on problem-solving and decision-making. I knew this tool and strongly believed that faculty would find it alienating and of little use in their own teaching career. I didn't say anything, but did wince when he mentioned to this tool. We were just relaxing in the bar after a demanding day of work. I didn't want to stir up anything. And it was noisy!

Our enduring relationship was established at this moment, for Gary picked up on my nonverbal display of disapproval. He immediately asked me about the reasons for my disapproval. I hesitated, but decided that his real concern about setting up a viable program was worth my candor. I shared my own experiences in using this tool with faculty and Gary seemed relieved to be rescued from a potentially-disastrous outcome. He then asked me if I had any idea of an alternative program for faculty. I told him about the "pioneering" work I had done with faculty as a young faculty member at the University of Idaho. Gary was intrigued and asked for more information about my program and about the outcomes of this program. I was soon asked by Gary to run my program at his consortium. The field of "faculty development" was born and both Gary and I became leaders in this newly-emerging academic reform movement.

I have written about "marker events" that are central to the founding stories of most long-term couples (Bergquist, 2023) These events (such as an extended conversation, a moment of graciousness, or even an embarrassing stumble) established a pattern in a couple's relationship that are repeatedly replicated during their many years together. It might be the way one member of the couple initiated a specific topic ("Jim was the first to mention his commitment to raising children") or the way in which one of the members offered advice ("Susan suggested that we order the Roast Duck, which was a specialty of this restaurant.") In the case of my relationship with Gary, it was the insistence on candor on Gary's part. He wanted to know what I really thought of this tool. It was also Gary's openness to new ideas that truly impressed me. Here I was. Unknown to Gary. Yet, he wanted to hear what I had to offer.

I believe that our relationship was also established and "cemented" at another level. Gary and I were both "way over our heads" at this conference. Virtually all of the other people attending this invitation-only conference were older, more experienced and of a highly level in the academic pecking order than Gary and me. I was sent as a substitute to this conference and Gary was invited because he was one of the few people in the United States who were actually helping colleges work together (the theme of this

conference). Gary's colleges were small and "unimportant" in the grand scheme of themes, whereas my organization was large and "important" but was represented by someone who was not important (me)! As a result of our precarious status, Gary and I were both anxious and worried about being "found out." I think we found some "safety" that evening in the Holiday Inn bar. It was at this point that Gary became my "Chum."

As Harry Stack Sullivan (1953a) indicated, our friendships with those who are of the same gender can be more intimate in some ways than the relationships we have with those of the same gender. While the matter of gender-identification has become much more challenging in recent years, there is still the matter of intimacy—especially intimacy that is found not in sexuality but in openness to being vulnerable, to expressing one's deepest feelings and to establish a theory-of-mind with a special person As I have noted, Sullivan suggests that this form of intimacy is often found, at least during adolescence, among our "chums" of the same gender. We also find this kind of "chum" relationship among "straight" women and gay men. They can be "intimate" with one another precisely because it is not sexualized. The straight woman and gay man become "beards" for one another. Their relationship might be hiding the male's sexual preference or the importance of this relationship for both of them. Together, these "intimate" friends often feel "liberated" from the usual male/female roles.

A shared myth and sense of self resided for many years at the heart of the matter for me and my "chum" Gary Quehl. Even when both of us were well-established and running nationally-known programs, Gary and I always viewed ourselves as "outsiders." We were fighting against the "big guys" (prestigious universities) and outmoded ideas during our twenty-five years together as working partners. The stance Gary and I were taking can be portrayed as "side by side." On a movie poster, Gary and I would be standing next to one another looking not at one another but at the attacking "enemy— much like Robert Redford and Paul Newman in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Lydia Denworth (2020, p. 156) suggests that this is the stereotypic stance of men as friends. We are friends on behalf of something bigger or something threatening. Side-by-Side friendships always seem to have an instrumental aspect.

In this spirit of being the "underdogs" and champions of the "oppressed" (members of less prestigious colleges and universities), Gary Quehl and I ran many successful faculty and administrative development programs, involving more than 500 colleges and universities. We published many higher education books together (including the acclaimed three volume series on faculty development). And later worked together on projects outside the domain of postsecondary education. Our relationship was always flavored with a sense of shared accomplishment.

Within a year after launching the faculty development in New York City, Gary and I became dear friends and buddies. We stayed in each other's home, spent many evenings appreciating great food and wine, and were there to offer support as each of us went through painful divorces. I ended up introducing Gary to his current (long-term) wife, while Gary and I were hosting a conference that led to my acquaintance with a conference-attendee who became my own current (long-term) wife. Gary and I have grown old together. We now live at opposite ends of the American continent, but still find ways to be together and look forward to sharing meals, drinks and memories -- accompanied by our wives.

The relationship between Gary Quehl and myself can be identified as *Meta-Phasic.* This relationship has endured, even as the nature and "purpose" of the relationship has changed over time. It not only has existed in multiple phases, it is "meta-phasic" because Gary and I are fully aware of the shifts that have

occurred and have gained insights regarding other relationships in our life by reflecting on our own relationship ("meta-learning"). Over a few glasses of wine or something stronger, we often reflect on what has happened in our life and how we have supported one another in a variety of ways. The old warriors still meet together to reflect back on their battles together

Gary and I have identified patterns in our relationship and looked to ways in which these patterns can be nurtured in other important relationships we have established. For example, Gary and I have found a way to create new projects together just before the end of an existing project. We learned how to make use of each other's strengths. I am a good idea person, while Gary is great at operationalizing and marketing the idea. Over the years, we were able to manage our instrumental friendship with agility as the nature of the project changed and the organization in which this project was enacted changed.

From the first, I particularly appreciate Gary's willingness to take a risk (e.g listening to another young man's ideas at a noisy bar in Wisconsin). When working with Gary, it is only important that there is an occasional win—and this means that there will be some inevitable losses along the way. I have had both big wins and embarrassing losses with Gary over the years. Gary and I have also had some big wins and losses in our personal lives (especially marriages) and have been there with one another to celebrate the wins (wedding ceremonies) and support the losses (divorces). My relationship with Gary Quehl has taught me that this is what a strong, enduring friendship is all about.

My Companion: Enduring Female Friendship

Most of my friendships have been established through work with another person on a project. I have not lived in many communities where neighbors frequently get together—largely because I have preferred to live in "remote" locations where neighbors do not live near one another. Furthermore, over the years, I have devoted most of my waking hours to relationships with my immediate family and relationships with people who share an ongoing project with me. As in the case of Gary Quehl, these working relationships sometime gradually transform into enduring friendships. One of these relationships is with Gay Teurman. Dr. Teurman was a doctoral student at the graduate school where I served as president. She then became a faculty member at this school and eventually served as my chief program administrator. She also became a close friend.

I find that my friendships with women often take on a different character from my friendships with men. I stand side-by-side with men, but stand face-to-face with Gay and other women. I can be a "chum" to Gary, but there is something of a companionship in my relationship with Gay. She is not my wife, not my lover or even my "girlfriend" – but she shares something quite intimate. We look directly at each other and find something important in this relationship itself. As Denworth (2020, p166) observers, this face-to-face stance is common among women. It is not the side-to-side stance of Redford and Newman (or Gary and myself).

While the work that Gay and I do together on behalf of our graduate school students takes on the character of raising children together, it also takes on the character of a special nurturing "care-ship". Gay and I can relax together after a day teaching a course or facilitating a retreat. There might not be any reflection back on the day's work, but there is a quiet savoring by each of us of the other person's skill and devotion, as well as the special nature of our relationship.

A colleague of mine who specializes in couple's therapy suggests that each member of a couple have many "affairs" with other people – just don't make them sexual! When we rely on our life-partner for

all forms of companionship, then we are asking for trouble. They can't meet all of our needs and rarely share all of our interests. Other people in our life can serve some of our needs (such as adventure) and share some of our interests (such as sports). In the case of Gay Teurman, she shares my deep interest in psychology and education, as well as meeting my need for a skillful collaborator. While I have worked with my wife as a co-facilitator of workshops, she does not share my commitment to psychological education. Dr. Teurman does (and is a good friend of my wife).

My Focused Friendships: Once and Twice Born

Many of my friendships are with those who belong to the same network. This network has changed over time—for a fairly narrow focus on higher education, to a much broader focus on coaching and consulting, and recently to a much narrower focus on co-authorship. I have sustained project-based relationships with most of these friends though some have moved beyond attention to specific projects.

In seeking to make sense of these diverse friendships, I have turned to the wisdom offered many years ago by William James (1982/1900), who differentiated between people who are "once-born" in their religious belief and those who are "twice born." The once-born are those people who remain constant in the religious beliefs they acquired in childhood, or their transition to a somewhat different set of religious beliefs and tenants has been gradual—and even unnoticeable unless brought to the believer's attention. Twice-born religious paths, on the other hand, involve quite visible (even dramatic) change in religious beliefs and practices. Those who are twice-born go through one or more profound "conversions" from one religious belief to another, or from a low level of religious commitment to a high level.

I borrow from William James in suggesting that some of my friendships are "once born." They either don't change over time or change very slowly. These are often friendship that are established around one project (such as writing an essay together) and come to an end once the project is completed. The gradual once-born friendship typically takes place when I engage in several related projects with a colleague. We continue to focus on whatever project is in front of us, but will begin to inquire about each other's family or will find a good excuse to meet together for lunch (if living near each other) in order to "discuss our work." The lunch often ends up being more about our personal lives, past history and future aspirations, then about the "project." If we don't live near each other, then we might schedule a phone or Zoom call for "updates" on the project—but end up talking about many matters other than the work we are doing together.

I have experienced several important and dramatic shifts in relationships among friends that are aligned with William James' description of "Twice-Born." Something occurs that leads to a significant change in the character and depth of the friendship. Some of the twice-born "conversions" in a friendship takes place when one of my friends becomes ill. This occurred several times during the early years of COVID-19. Suddenly, it was a matter of life-and-death (or at least sustained disability or return to health). The project was set aside during a period of ill health. I felt a "compulsion" to check in with my friend—not on behalf of the project but rather on behalf of my friend's health. I wanted to be supportive, empathetic and helpful (in some way). I often didn't know how to manage this new form of friendship nor did I know what to do with the project (to which I was still committed). As in the case of twice-born religious conversions, there are many moments of uncertainty among those trying to relate in a new way to the "transformed" friend.

The twice-born change can also come from a new status in my relationship with the other person. As in the case of Gay Teurman, my friend might have been a student at my school who had graduated. Instead of being their dissertation chair, I am now a co-author. Instead of relating to a faculty member, I am now relating to a fellow administrator. I have recently been working with members of a state supreme court. They talk about the major change that occurs when a lawyer has been appointed to a judicial position (as a judge). Their old friendships with fellow lawyers either has to be terminated (to avoid conflict of interest) or has to be drastically curtailed or constrained. When talking to judges participating in this project, I was told repeatedly that this profound shift in friendships is very painful.

There is the third, most obvious, way in which friendships go through twice-born transitions. A very important and time-consuming project comes to an end. There may be a termination event (such as an end-of-project party), but then there is loss and a sense of "death." Our "child" has left home or is no longer alive. To the extent that our own personal identity has been invested in this project and to the extent that our project-related friends help us establish and maintain this project-related identity, then the sense of "death" might be even greater – for we must bid farewell to our "old" self and must create a new one either by embracing a new project or finding some other way in which to establish an identity (that might not be as transitory). And what happens when a whole cluster of projects come to an end at the same time. This what occurs when we retire from an organization or close out volunteer work in our community. Multiple deaths are often associated with retirement and we should not be surprised that many people do not look forward to their retirement or fall into a state of depression soon after they retire.

History and Friendships

In writing about enduring, intimate relationships (Bergquist, 2023), I mentioned an often-overlooked benefit of living with someone for many years. We have a shared history with them and they have witnessed us change (and remain the same) over a lifetime and often in many different settings. If we get a divorce, then there is no longer someone with whom we share this history. Those who separate permanently from their partner will often find that this loss of a shared history is what they most miss. The same can be said about long-term sustained friendships.

I am reminded of the song "Old Friends" written by Paul Simon. Two old men are sitting together on a park bench. Both of them hold memories of the past and of "what a time it was." Memories are preserved by each man. I suspect that their conversations on the bench primarily focused on these memories—especially those that they share. I have witnessed this sharing among friends that gather every day at a nearby fast-food restaurant. I overhear their conversations (or am I "snooping" as only a psychologist is allowed to do!). The five of them have obviously known one another for many years. They tell tales of past ventures together, of mistakes made (always accompanied with laughter) and of wonderful moments in their individual and collective lives. Like Simon's "old friends," each of these five friends is "preserving" their memories by sharing them.

Most of us can align with these five fast-food friends. Our enduring friends (like our enduring life partner) have seen us through "everything." They have been "eye-witnesses" to our successes and our failures. They can tell many stories about what we have seen and done together and separately. Perhaps most importantly, our enduring friends know about our personal narrative. We have told them how we find meaning in some event, what we believed "caused" our success or failure, and what is really

important (and feared) in our life. None of this can be replaced if we are no longer in contact with this long-term friend.

We might even take this sense of shared history a step further. Harry Stack Sullivan would suggest that it is in our relationships with other people that we gain what he identifies as "consensual validation" regarding reality (Sullivan, 1953b, pp. 43ff). It is not just our shared history and our sense of self that is beholding to our friendships—but also our basic sense of what constitutes our world as well as how we best find meaning in this world. Sullivan suggests that this consensual validation is particularly important to establish during our turbulent adolescent years –and that it is most likely to be established in collaboration with our "chum" and other friends (rather than with our parents, siblings or lovers). Leslie Brothers (2001) goes so far as to suggest that we create a new reality in the midst of our relationships with other people.

Conclusions

I became more fully aware of the historical and reality-affirming benefit of friendship when co-teaching a doctoral course with Gay Teurman. We were focusing on adult development and the work of Carl Jung. As a component of this course, Dr. Teurman and I took our doctoral students to the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco (a magnificent edifice sitting on top of San Francisco's Nob Hill). A labyrinth has been built in the main sanctuary of this cathedral. The labyrinth is a maze (complex pathway) on which one walks and reflects (usually about events in one's past and future life). It is located in the nave of the Grace Cathedral and is illuminated primarily by light streaming down (during daylight hours) from the cathedral's many stained-glass windows.

At times one is led on the pathway toward the center of the labyrinth (which is the endpoint and "goal" of the labyrinth journey). Then, suddenly the pathway leads away from the center and one is once again out at the edge of the labyrinth. For most people (including myself) this In-and-out pathways is reminiscent of one's actual life journey. Memories which the labyrinth stirs up will typically align with the highlights and low lights of our life. I found my sense of reality being realigned for a moment (and perhaps even longer) while walking the labyrinth with my dear friend.

While I have occasionally "walked" the labyrinth in other locations both inside and outside the United States, there was something "special" about my experiences on this labyrinth. It was not only the grandeur and spiritual ambiance of the Grace Cathedral that made this journey special. It was also the experience of walking this labyrinth alongside someone with whom I have shared many ups and downs in my professional (and personal) life.

It is interesting and perhaps important to note that I can't remember whether Gay was ahead of me on the labyrinth or behind me. The important point is that we were both on the pathway together and could share our experiences and feelings about this journey once we left the labyrinth and cathedral. I can't imagine a more valuable and insightful "debriefing" experience than that engaged by Gay Teurman and me on the steps of the Cathedral following our labyrinth journey. It was on the cathedral steps that I most fully realized the benefit of friendships and a shared history.

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