

"Oh friends, there is no friend..."

The praxis of friendship as an art of (social-) living

By Harald Lemke

The modern history of utopian thinking has brought up one tradition among others whose understanding of utopia is essentially an utopia of the aesthetic: the realization of utopia is considered to be a free and autonomous shaping of the conditions of living. Sharing this understanding of freedom as an autonomous praxis of life-shaping the tradition of the aesthetic utopia diverged into two contrary strands due to different opinions about how this ideal could become realized. Freedom could be realized in terms of the project of a revolutionary *macro-politics*; the realization of the aesthetic utopia could on the other hand also be conceived as the task of the individual's *micro-politics*.

The macro-political tradition, epitomized by marxism, holds the conviction that in order to realize the utopia of free society, it is necessary to revolutionize the system of capitalistic production. Furthermore, that the revolutionary subject, which will enforce that fundamental change, is produced by the antagonistic dynamic of the capitalistic production system itself; in the proletariat being the oppressed and exploited class and majority, the dignity of mankind as such is negated. Of course, I am making extreme simplifications here but my intention is not to talk extensively about marxism and the problematics of its revolution theory.

The micro-political tradition of the aesthetic utopia starts with Schiller. Here the realisation of freedom is thought of as the political ethics of the individual. Schiller maintains that the transformation of heteronomous life conditions are possible only on the level of the individuals who try to realize freedom by attempting to shape their life autonomously. In such a personal ethics the realisation of freedom is immediately possible on the level of the individual's task, while in the marxist perspective the realisation of utopian hope is dependant on the organisation of the proletarian revolution and the fundamental transformation of the economical order, so that only after having achieved these social-economical changes mankind enter the realm of aesthetic freedom. Revolutionary praxis in Schiller's understanding becomes "a difficult art of living"¹. In this story the utopia of freedom and the everyday aesthetics of the individual's life-shaping are mutually interconnected. Recently it was Foucault who reminded us of this aesthetic utopia. He also emphasized that life-shaping can be tied up with the effort of the individual to realize personal freedom. Although Foucault was not referring to Schiller, he too considered "the praxis of freedom" as a difficult art of living. But here I also do not want to talk about Foucault.

However, what seems to become historically evident is that the hope that the working class will finally stand up and revolutionize the whole social order, can not be reasonably sustained

¹ Vgl. Harald Lemke, Die schwierige Lebenskunst. Schiller, Marcuse und Foucault über den Begriff der ästhetischen Freiheit, Maastricht 1995: 118-152

any longer. That does not mean that we have to give up the utopian hope altogether, it rather draws the emphasis more to the second alternative.

The recent societal change, which is usually expressed as the transformation of modernity to postmodernity in Western labour society is described by a broad range of literature as a process of ubiquitous aesthetization. Almost all aspects of life received an aesthetic reevaluation. Now, my question is whether such postmodern aesthetizations of everyday life have something to do with the aesthetic utopia I was just referring to. For if the realization of freedom is possible through the individual's task of an aesthetic life-shaping, it seems to be plausible to assume that the current spread of the aesthetic has an utopian impact. In other words the question becomes: is there an utopian dimension in postmodern everyday aesthetics?

In all aspects of life one can perceive an aesthetic stylization of things and their outer appearance. Wherever you look: household equipment, furniture, cars, cosmetics, architecture of shopping and city centres, restaurants and pubs, etc. - you find the same phenomenon of a general prioritization of the aesthetic value of things and commodities. When the modern functionalist paradigm implied that form follows function, the prevailing of form against function seems to hint at a fundamental shift of the society situation. While the functionalist principle of low-cost efficacy testified an economizing living-standard covering basic necessities, postmodern aesthetization expresses a life-style of material luxury including the freedom of choice. However, this remarkable change of life aesthetics affects only the increase of material wealth, but not the increase of aesthetic freedom. The aesthetics of postmodern existence as a purchased life-style indicates no utopian dimension, insofar as the achievement of such an aesthetics results not from an autonomous shaping of life-conditions but rather from the accepted unfreedom to make the necessary money for such a life-style under conditions the individuals do not determine autonomously. An aesthetics of life that depends entirely on one's financial capacities is forced to be an ornamentalisation of fundamentally heteronomous conditions of making-a-living. According to the unchanged and individually almost unchangeable constraints of the labour market, such endless accumulation of money becomes something hollow and flat. If postmodern aesthetization would merely consist in the postfordistic increase of the purchasing force, then surely the aesthetic reevaluation of everyday life *does not include any* utopian potentials; postmodern priority of the aesthetic appearance to real being, proves to be a superficial cosmeticisation of grey on grey labor life. However, there is something more to be said about the current life-situation.

The economical developments which brought about an increase of material wealth for a huge majority of people in the Western societies caused simultaneously a fundamental change in the condition of their social life. What is sociologically referred to as process of individualization reflects the circumstance that - due to unlimited mobility nowadays - the individual is increasingly torn out of social bonds and customary sociality. An even stronger force of social disintegration, although itself supported by economically enforced individualism, is the social-cultural liberation of women from their patriarchally enforced gender-existence as house-wives. In this perspective the postmodern emergence of an

individualized society indicates a rich emancipatory potential since it pushes forward individualistic freedom to shape social relationships with whoever you personally want. Freedom here signifies the liberation of the individual from any traditionally pregiven and coercively imposed sociability. Thus social disintegration processes lay bare the shapeability of social life as a whole and consequently make it possible to shape one's own sociability according to personal freedom. In this perspective the postmodern aesthetic of living does not coincide with the ornamentics of the purchased life-style, it depends not on income, but instead opens up the empirical and normative enlargement of the social-cultural *possibility* to realize the utopia of autonomous life-shaping as a quest for the individualized existence.

How then can the possibility of a free and autonomous shaping of one's sociality become realized? Irrespective of the whom, the why and the whether of all, the social relationships I am shaping, depend solely on my free decision and voluntary choice; the conditions of my social life with others emerge out of my personal power - nobody can force me nor prescribe a type of sociality and norms of social manner. It proves my personal freedom in relating to others that I only initialize and shape bonds to them insofar as they serve my personal interests. Thus my motivations in shaping social relationships are necessarily based on selfishness insofar as I am only interested in social associations which serve my subjective happiness. In this respect I am free to instrumentalize the others as a means to my personal ends and purposes[H.K.F1]. Consequently, it will be possible to shape social relationships only on the basis of mutual use and advantages - what is usually termed acquaintances or *loose and superficial friendships*. A recent sociological study on friendship-relations describes the predominance of use-friendships as the ultimate solution of postmodern sociality. As a matter of fact this scientific evaluation is empirically supported by the ideal life-form of single-households which the individualized society fosters.

Superficial friendships are said to have a high social functionality because they enable the shaping of the social life of the individualized existence according to the everyday requirements of working life in an optimal way. Insofar as we mutually achieve personal benefits through these relationships, we would not otherwise be able to get, to organize those loose friendships seems to be the most efficient means to shape one's sociality.

Thus this understanding traces the predominance of instrumentality in social life back to the so called culture of narcissism (Christoph Lasch) as one answer to the possibility of shaping one's social life freely.

But, if the realization of personal freedom results in narcissistic sociality then, to be sure, it is not possible to shape one's company with others autonomously, since the others themselves have the same freedom to determine social relationships according to their personal use and narcissistic interests. Each other's attempt to realize individual freedom is mutually negated and ultimately made impossible. Consequently, the narcissistic way of determining the conditions of social life has no utopian meaning. In one word: personal life does become shaped, however not on the level of reciprocal recognition of individual freedom.

As long as I do not respect the equality of the other's freedom, an autonomous shaping of our being-together is not realizable because we instrumentalize and treat each other as mere means

for subjective ends. But why at all should the narcissist be interested in social relationships which do not seem to have any advantage but rather seem to be time-consuming and practically demanding? Anyway, there seem to be two main reasons that support the functionality and therefore desirability of superficial friendships: firstly because there remains so little time after working for private concerns and socializing, so that one can be glad to maintain a decent social network. Secondly this entire story about good friendship seems to be unrealistic and based on anachronistic ideals of altruism and unselfish devotion for the other[H.K.F2].

As a matter of fact, true or good friendship as free and equal communality, as the philosophers from Plato to Kant always asserted, must be based on unselfish benevolence and respect of the other as such - as singular personality, as an end-in-itself, instead of being a means for achieving this or that particular usefulness and advantageousness. Now if this unselfish benevolence defines a precondition for good friendships then of course in the shaping of his or her social life the narcissist develops no interest in the sociability of good friendships. And as we have seen what constitutes the individualistic freedom is the possibility to dismiss all social bonds which are essentially based on pre-given normative fixations or moral obligations, like that of unselfish good-will and mutual respect in good friendships. The narcissistic existence with its self-interested relationships thus seems to be the only realistic aesthetic of shaping one's social life.

Although this sociality does not increase aesthetic freedom it still implies the emancipatorily relevant capability of the individual to dismiss all pre-given, heteronomous and culturally imposed social relations, including even relationships of equality.

To sum up what has been said so far: to describe the obvious fact of a predominance of superficial friendship-relations as the only possible realisation of postmodern social life, on the basis of the achieved emancipation seems to be the proper way in which we are able to pursue our individualistic ideal of personal happiness. This somehow leads to an irritating conclusion: in facing the possibility of an autonomous shaping of personal life - and that means to realize freedom at least in one sphere of life - the individualized existence of postmodernity *decides against* this autonomy and *dismisses* such realizable freedom in favor of a narcissism in which the being-together with others is considered not to be essential for one's personal happiness. When one calculates according to maxims of self-interested usage this socializing can principally not be an end-in-itself.

This understanding of the utopian relevance of postmodern aesthetic takes tacitly for granted that the individualized existence is solely interested in instrumental relationships and that personal freedom is only imaginable as narcissism. However, these implicit convictions I want to question subsequently. There are signs of an increasing need to shape those relationships which are not instrumental in their nature but rather for the sake of themselves. On the level of what has been said so far it remains an option of personal freedom that self-responsible life-shaping *also includes* the possible decision to shape relationships to others which are not based on egoistic self-interest but on the contrary on unselfish equality. For in free and equal relationships in which the friends do not negate but respect the other's autonomy, each other's

freedom can become the basis of their relationship so that in the interplay of mutual and equal determination of the conditions of their social being-together, they preserve and stabilize their common autonomy. To Giddens, the American social theorist, pushing the utopian dimension of the postmodern individualisation to a realization of free and equal relationships, which he calls "pure relationships", would lead to a "democratisation of personal life": "The increase of autonomy of the self in the context of pure relationships is rich in implications for the *democratic praxis of society*. Democratisation of personal life and democratic possibilities of the global political order are to a great degree symmetric." (The transformation of intimacy, p. 211)

The actualization of the utopian potentials of the postmodern everyday-life aesthetic determines a necessity to shape democratic sociability (demokratische Sittlichkeit). This democratisation of social life makes the shape of free and equal relationships socially real. What Giddens calls academically "pure relationships" is usually understood as *true or good friendships*. So in shaping good friendship-relations personal freedom is unrestrictedly realizable and only in realizing good friendships can we shape our social existence freely and autonomously - nobody and nothing is able to do that for us! The democratic sociality of friendship relations proves to be *an art* of (social-) living because its aesthetic neither means a purchased life-style nor an imputed narcissistic egoism but instead the common, equal and autonomous shaping of the conditions of being-together. Insofar as the recent social-cultural transformations open up the possibility for the individuals to democratize their social bonds by shaping good friendships, one can conclude that postmodern aesthetizations do have an intense utopian meaning.

Now I want to turn to the reasons *why* there could be a reasonable self-interest to realize the possibility of an autonomous, rather than a narcissistic shaping of social life; *why* for the individualized existence it could become more and more desirable to recognize and keep the other's freedom and shape unselfish relationships.

The effect of social disintegration on the current individualization process not only makes possible the free shapeability of social conduct, it also reveals a remarkable matter of social life. Up to recent times it was family life that served the need of social reproduction with all its aspects: caring for affection, self-confidence, feelings of security, relaxation, physical and psychological health, personal identity etc. in short: family life produced a somehow acceptable feeling of personal welfare. Since this need for a feeling of well-being can not be commercially produced or at all purchased, the institutionalization of the caring house-wife and mother was definitely one of the most cunning inventions of the modern labour society. In the historical moment of the dissolution of the nuclear family however, this institution no longer guarantees the compensation of the remaining necessity for personal well-being. As an unavoidable result the individual's life-shaping comprises the demanding task of satisfying the need for personal well-being. The freedom of shaping social life thus coincides with the necessity of shaping according to something particular - that is to personal welfare and not to professional career.

The predominance of single-households and loose social-networks might be a result of narcissistic independence, but it also reveals an altogether different social fact. For the empirical circumstance that the increase of social isolation and existential loneliness is *experienced as* a threat and with anxiety, a piece of human nature becomes undeniably manifest in the current social disintegration: the need for social closeness, emotional security and certainty of trust reveals itself to be essentially the need for the Others as the (re-)source of one's own well-being. The Western ideal of centered subjectivity principally ignored this needfulness for unconditioned sociability by reducing desirability and needfulness altogether to blind and unfree animalistic drives. Facing this oppression of the human nature as a constituents of centered subjectivity of Western civilization, Adorno and Horkheimer already expressed in their *Dialectics of Enlightenment* the wish to remind of this aspect of human nature ("das Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt"). It is crucial to see that it was particularly *Epicurus' hedonism* that made an exception here. But his hedonism not only traced the natural need for the other back to its origin, the attempt to overcome the existential fear of isolation, it also pointed out the importance of good friendship-relations in properly satisfying this natural need. One fragment says: "For loneliness and a life without friends is full of threats and anxieties, reason itself advises to shape friendships."

In caring for one's welfare by shaping friendship-relations, the individual shapes the condition of the social being according to freedom instead of necessity. Care for an autonomous shape of social relationships coincides with the care for the good life that is otherwise unattainable.

If Epicurus' social-ontology is true² then the postmodern art of living is, out of fundamental reasons, neither realizable by means of a purchased life-style nor through such relationships which are limited to instrumentality, however properly by shaping good friendship-relations. Thus the desire for friendship-relations depends on the autonomous and reasonable decision to care for one's good life. The care for personal well-being manifests itself as the longing for good friends because solely through this particular relationship one satisfies the care for one's self, surmounts the danger of loneliness and escapes the insecurity of superficial relationships. Since we are free to shape good friendships, why is there no culture of friendship in our society, if this is the only way to achieve a proper feeling of personal well-being?

Of course the desire for friends as the care for one's self may explain *why* the individualized existence wants non-instrumental sociality. But the mere desire for the other as friend does not yet shape a type of social relationship that is as demanding and difficult as good friendship is said to be. So what really makes good friendship possible[H.K.F3]?

Shaping narcissistic relationships presupposes the reciprocity of a somehow commonly shared, particular interest. The relating activity is defined through the attempt to attain that interest. Generally, in relationships based on self-interest the mutual shaping remains an enclosed interaction. In stark contrast to that shaping good friendships requires, as I already mentioned in the moral philosophical doctrine, the virtue of the individual to suppress

² That in friendship one's welfare becomes realized through its inherent dramaturgy of the keeping of sensuality and the truth of self I can not elaborate here

possible egoism and selfish orientations. Only by enforcing this virtuousness against oneself, one is capable of fulfilling the requirement of good friendship, which is the moral attitude of benevolence. Unsurprisingly, Aristotle concluded, such an ethical approach towards the other is only conceivable by the "good persons" who are capable of virtue and moral excellence. Cicero then radicalized this position by asserting that social relationships between good persons are automatically good friendship because of their moral excellence while those relationships between the ordinary people cannot become more than exclusively superficial and morally suspicious "friendships". But by arguing that good friendship depends on virtue and insofar as being a good person has always been a subject of moral obligation the philosophical discourse established the belief that not use-based and unselfish, i.e. good friendship is a moral ideal and practically almost not realizable because of a simple reason: those good persons seldom exist! Cicero and Montaigne hold the opinion that good friendships such as they themselves realized exist only all three centuries. Kant and Schopenhauer finally believed that good friendships are not realizable at all. Anyway, good friendships seem to be unattainable because their practical preconditions are very demanding morally.

Yet, what remains is that the promise of welfare good friendship pledges, feeds nevertheless the desire for good friendship. Aristotle desperately repeats the paradoxical saying "Oh friends, there is no friend" which runs through the entire history of the philosophical discourse on friendship. Again: "Oh friends, there is no friend" spells out the unreconcilable tension between the belief that good friendship is an unrealizable moral obligation and simultaneously the inexhaustible desire for the other as friend.

Does that mean the shaping of good friendship as the art of social well-living, although it is desired and cared for, is impossible because of its high moral implications so that there is no realization of personal autonomy in everyday aesthetics? Or is it really necessary to be virtuous to make friendship possible?

To figure out why the possibility of shaping good friendships does not necessarily or inevitably demand morally good persons without giving up altogether the assumption that good friendships is possible for everybody who wants to shape them, it will be of help to analyse the shaping of friendships as a particular type of action.

In use-friendships and acquaintances the shaping of the being-together is determined by the common pursuit of what is mutually shared. The relationship activity is successful inasmuch as it enables the partners to attain their individual interests. Thus the communality of their relationship-shaping consists in, for instance, performing certain enterprises. The mutuality of the partners does not include the necessity to appreciate the others' personality as such. With regard to the instrumental basis of their company; the other person is only of interest as a means of one's selfish orientations.

However, if one wants explicitly friendships that are not based on this or that particular activity or end, but on the pursuit of reciprocal well-being and therefore one is respecting and liking the other because of his or her otherness, as a unique and different person, then one is interested in shaping the relationship as an end-in-itself: in shaping being-together the friends

pursue no other end than this state is being shaped. In this respect the difference between use-friendships and good friendships contains first of all different types of acting: the former's shaping is essentially determined by the particular activities pursued and thus the relationship action is a means to an end, the latter's shaping is devoted to the shaping of the relationship itself and thus the relationship's action is an end-in-itself.

Now, Aristotle calls actions that are an end-in-itself *praxis*. In praxis the end of action is the performance (Vollzug) of this very activity, it has no end beyond its performance. In contrast to that Aristotle calls *poiesis* those actions whose goals are the enforcement of an end or a work, that is itself external to the performance of those actions[H.K.F4].

This distinction of praxis and poiesis, to be sure, played a fundamental role in Arendt's political philosophy and in Habermas's communication theory. Each of them contextualized praxis in different fields of interest. While Habermas illegitimately attributed praxis to all communicative actions in the life world, Arendt was right by stressing that praxis is a peculiar type of democratic interaction. But Arendt herself limited democratic praxis to participation in the political. However, it is also possible to show that a similar action to the political praxis can be found in the private domain of friendship shaping. Therefore it is necessary to realize that the possibility of good friendship relies on the relationship-shaping, an activity exercised as an end-in-itself. (selbstzweckhafte Tätigkeit). Consequently, if the shaping of friendship can be described as praxis then its realization depends on the general implications that all types of end-in-itself actions share.

Whether playing piano, exercising sports, dancing, celebrating, deliberating, loving - a first precondition of any praxis is the voluntary decision for and the personal appreciation of that activity: a *willingness*. As we have seen, in regard to good friendships this precondition is fulfilled through the care for one's self and welfare. Therefore obviously nobody has to be morally excellent but has to have the free possibility.

This willingness is related to a *readiness*. Readiness for praxis implies both being related to the appreciation and oriented towards the inherent conditions of that activity itself. As a general attitude readiness becomes manifest in what can be called *effort*: Whatever the action is the activity in which the end of action is its performance itself, always requires an effort. I will never be able to play piano if I do not subject myself to the effort to learn it. This effort does not coincide with an short or temporary trouble: if I play only once in a while, depending on my mood to play piano, than, of course, it can be fun to play "on" the piano, but it would not become more than mere bungling. To be able to play piano I have to spent the effort that this activity inherently demands. This effort must not be identified with bearing a burden or exhaustive labour, it rather means continuous work that I voluntarily and personally take over.

According to this readiness for effort, a necessary precondition of praxis consists in an active engagement. Active engagement is demonstrated in what one can call *constancy* in practicing that activity. If I want to learn how to play piano I have to exercise constantly otherwise I will never be able to play piano.

That leads to a third practical requirement of praxis actions. Constancy is related to *patience*. To play piano requires a constant *and* patient exercising. Neither the mere good will nor the property of a piano suffices - solely the patient training and performing of that practical activity promises its success. The patience for praxis does not coincide with the constancy of acting but rather has something to do with the patience in facing the possibility of *failure*. In comparison to constancy the dimension of patience thus hints at an altogether different temporality: while constancy indicates a time that I spent, patience inheres a time that the exercising and practicing of that activity itself demands. The more time that I devote to the practicing the more likely becomes its success. Consequently the success of a praxis depends, apart from its inherent requirements, on a proper temporality that is not restricted or limited through external defaults and conditions. In other words: the grade of success of a praxis is influenced, not only by its intrinsic requirements, but also eminently conditioned through outer circumstances.

The last constituents of praxis is *knowledge*: each praxis has and requires a type of practical knowledge, what is usually referred to as prudence (phronesis). Without at least an implicit knowledge praxis performance is not possible, for to play piano one *knows* how to play piano. This implicit knowledge includes, to be sure, the possibility of an explicit reflection and a rather more general (theoretical) preoccupation with that praxis. And of course, the more knowledge the practitioner of a praxis has the better. But in opposition to practical prudence the amount of explicit, theoretical knowledge does not at all influence the grade of success of praxis in an instantaneous way. It is therefore not without significance how one talks theoretically about friendship because it *does* influence, however instantaneously, the self-understanding of the everyday praxis of friendship. It is also not without significance that currently there exist little literature and reflections of friendship at all. An other point that testifies this lack of concern with friendship is that in everyday life we are always talking with friends and about friends but seldom *about friendship* and the way of our praxis of friendship, although everybody knows that communications about relationships are once in a while extremely clarifying.

Only if these practically *demanding preconditions* are fulfilled by the practitioner, will he or she gain the possibility to realize the wish to pursue a certain praxis. That is to say, only if these demanding requirements are fulfilled will he or she initiate the possibility of practicing them.

Now, there is a further particularity about the internal dynamic of praxis action. Due to its being end-in-itself the constant and long-lasting exercise makes possible a permanent improvement: after long lasting exercising one becomes a "good" piano player. This goodness thus is only attainable through the constant engagement in exercising that praxis. This improved exercising of praxis Aristotle calls *eupraxis*, i.e. the good practising. That means that if one is willing and if one engages constantly and accurately than *everybody* can become a good player or actor. That there exists a talent for certain praxis proves finally to what degree good practising depends of practical skillfulness. This internal improvement of performing as good practising is in a restricted sense also possible in poiesis action if the performing of that

activity becomes raised in value in comparison to its instrumental determination by the external goal. Under this condition one obtains even in instrumental action a goodness of performance. This eupraxis of poiesis is called excellence or *art*, like in the art of cooking, the art of arrow shooting, the art of motorcycling, the art of building, the art of craftsmanship, etc.

The fact that some action performances are receptive for immanent refinement to an art clarifies an interesting point. For only against the background of the potentiality of such an inherent improvement that very action *can fail*: there are "bad" cooks and "awful" piano players only because there are as well excellent cooks and magnificent piano players.

But there remains a fundamental difference between eupraxis and art of instrumental action. Because the goal of cooking, for instance, remains principally the attainment of something external to that action performance, instrumental activities are always reducible and replaceable by behavior like purchasing and consuming: you can buy good food to eat good food but therefore you do not have to be a good cook but rather you need money that you earn not by being a good cook but by going to work. In contrast, to become a good piano player there is no other way than practising this activity: you may buy the best piano in the world, you may hire to best piano teacher in the world - there is only one thing about becoming a famous player - to practice[H.K.F5]!

While the difficult nature of good friendships lead the philosophical tradition to the assumption that only *good persons* are capable of such relationships, we have seen that one can offer a different conclusion. If we describe friendship not as the result of a moral and virtuous relationship to one's self (by suppressing selfishness) but rather as an practical, end-in-itself activity, then the reason why the success of practising good friendship corresponds to an difficult art of acting can be traced back to the sources of its practical sophistication: its inherent delicateness. But nevertheless the eupraxis of good friendship is not a moral ideal which one personally will never be able to satisfy; it is also not just a romantic and obsolete phantasy that is driven by a naive humanism. As good cooking or good piano playing are not mere phantoms, good friendships becomes comprehensible as a result of a personal engagement. Despite the tremendous difficulties in the art of friendship, its praxis remains what it is: an everyday activity[H.K.F6].

The praxis of friendship shares with other praxis-forms the practically demanding requirements. Insofar as friends want to shape their relationship for the sake of their end-in-itself, being-together (*selbstzweckhafte Zusammensein*) their engagement underlies the personal readiness, constant and patient exercise, implicit knowledge of the particularity of this relationship and a knowledge of the other's personality. At this point we are in the position to understand that if one conceives of friendship as an end-in-itself activity with all its practical implications then it becomes comprehensible that good friendship, where those involved care for each other's welfare, is growing "out of itself" - *but only if* friendship is constantly practiced. Likewise, to want or to wish good friendship is inevitably tied up with the necessity to actively engage for it. As little as one expects that it might be possible to become a good piano player or cook by exercising once in a while as likely it is that good friendship does not become realized if one does not spend constant and patient effort on it. In

a somehow uneasy sense the praxis-character of friendship includes a moment of trivial pragmatism: those who want to have good friends and know accordingly how to act, will gain them.

I have reached a point where I could stop, summing up that because good friendship is always practically realizable, presupposing that the friends are willing and fulfill all practical requirements for the successful performance of good friendship, the obvious predominance of superficial friendships and narcissistic relationships prove that nobody is really pre-disposed towards good friendship shaping.

But is it really always true that when somebody engages accurately in shaping friendship bonds, he or she will get good friendships? Is not one of most frustrating points about friendships to others that even if we personally want and engage actively, it does not become a good relationship? And as it was said earlier, because of the fact that praxis can succeed it also may fail. Now what makes friendship so difficult to achieve?

The general difference of praxis activity to instrumental actions consists in their peculiarity that the goal of their action cannot be realized otherwise than by exercising them: it is impossible to achieve these goals by purchasing or consuming them. In this respect praxes are characterized as being ends-in-themselves. But this formulation is somehow misleading because in talking about activities, which are done for the sake of being done, one suggests a coercive self-referentiality which is not characteristic for praxis performing. For with these activities we pursue *certain* goals and ends, like piano playing, dancing, cooking, etc. In regard to their being enclosed activities, they themselves are means for ends which hint beyond their specific performance. These praxis actions are only certain activities under the general concern of one's life-shaping. As particular occupations their end is oriented towards the ultimate end of one's life course. The piano player gives concerts to achieve glory and eternity; the dancer dances to earn money; one is preparing a delicious meal to refresh a guided palette, etc.

In opposition to that the company of friends is, apart from being a practical activity, simultaneously a way to shape one's social being. The goal of their praxis does not exhaust itself in achieving this or that particular activity but rather the wish to shape commonly the condition of their sociality. Although they also pursue certain enterprises and activities with their common praxis, they live their social life in such a manner that they thereby satisfy their equal and autonomous care for the good life of well-being. Friendship is thus as a praxis of life-shaping the art of social living. From Pythagoras to Nietzsche from Augustinus to Bloch, from Montaigne to Foucault one can trace the repetition that friendship is a free and autonomous way of living and that its shape results out of its democratic praxis. Friendship thus is neither a particular praxis activity nor one relationship between others but a special attempt to live one's social life as an end-in-itself. In other words: by practising friendship relations it becomes possible to combine the care for one's good life and the realization of personal freedom. This connection has a remarkable input on our critique of the current societal life-situation: to care for one's well-being that increasingly becomes damaged by the requirements of labour existence (Berufslbens) one wishes to shape non-instrumental and satisfying sociality. Good friendships by means of their democratic praxis promise a personal

well-being which is not a work of virtue or intimacy, they can not be achieved by instrumental acquaintances or by purchasing social services but only result out of a personal engagement in the everyday attempt to shape autonomously one's good social life (welfare).

However, this picture becomes to harmonizing if the consideration does not include the internal difficulty and delicateness and the external fragility of shaping friendship relations.

For the practising of good friendship does not only comprise of the pursuing of particular activities and enterprises but also of the attempting to shape the conditions of the personal being-together in a way that the participants has the same right to determine, criticize, object, disagree, making decisions, etc., the very performance of that praxis is permanently and intrinsically exposed to problems and risks of lapse. And insofar as their democratic praxis involve the whole personality of the friends with all their peculiarities, friendship relations are inevitably difficult to keep. Regarding the whole range of internally permanent possible conflicts, tensions, misunderstandings, rejections, unconscious projections, suppressed weakness, etc. which occur between friends because they are friends, the inner dynamic of friendship is enormously delicate.

A further delicate peculiarity of good friendships emerges out of the nature of human affairs: the one who is able to play good piano is able to do so whenever the sufficient preconditions are available, that is to say, that you can play good piano on any piano, insofar as you are able to play good piano. Of course does the sociable person know better how to become a friend with a sullen person (Mürrisch) than somebody who is not so skillfully socializing, like the good cook knows how to prepare a delicious meal when there are only simple ingredients available. And yet what remains a fact is that the one who once had a good friendship with someone does not necessarily develop a good friendship with somebody else *only because* he had this previous friendship.

According to the unpredictability of the successfulness of each exercised friendship, despite and even because of its pragmatism, it somehow seems to be a wonder!

Still up to this point I have not talked further about the most significant peculiarity of praxis actions. While the list I mentioned above stressed the practical preconditions which the willing persons have to bring towards the praxis activity, in order to make it possible at all, there is now more to be said about what these praxis activities themselves require. To realize the ends of praxis actions, for instance piano playing as we have seen, there exists only one possibility: you cannot enforce it subjectively, you have to get involved in its actions. In the regard that each praxis demands certain action performances and cultural skills which correspond to their inherent nature, the practising of each praxis characterizes *a responding manner of acting*. This responding manner does not coincide with the actual deed or activity, it rather shows that each actual performance is always coded in a proper modality. The responding modality of praxis which expresses its essential self-sufficiency, I want to call *mimetic dramaturgy*. The constancy and patience in the personal engagement hinted already at this mimetic dramaturgy. However, while in enclosed (eingegrenzten) praxis-forms this mimetic acting remains defined through each particular activity pursued, in friendship the mimetic dramaturgy responds to the matter of the indisposability of each others freedom and

independence. For each one of the friends is not capable of enforcing their being-together and moreover the possibility to relate to one another depends on each other's willingness to maintain that relationship. Therefore, friends have to act in such a manner that each performing contributes to the possibility of future acting. The mimetic dramaturgy of friendship practice thus responds to the fact of the subjective indisposability of their *common thing*. The friends are responding dramaturgically to this priority of the in-between of their being-together by, what I want to call, *keeping manner*. In all everything they commonly do, they inevitably have to behave well to one another, to treat each other as respectfully, carefully and attentively as it serves to avoid the void - the break of their relationship. To say that friends keep their being-together *by keeping*, means to reformulate its end-in-itself nature on the level of its dramaturgical modality. On [H.K.F7]one side this dramaturgy of keeping helps lessening the delicate and agonistic dynamic of the interplay between friends, on the other side *the keeping itself* is enormously demanding and requires a whole culture of habitual practices: generosity, gratefulness, openness, spontaneity, sociability, cheerfulness, constancy, reliability, trustworthiness, attentiveness, helpfulness, charm, joke, etc. These habitual requirements make the achievement of friendship-relations *so difficult*. Although these demanding cultural skills help reduce the permanent delicateness of friendship practising, its eu-praxis, they do not at all guarantee its successful performance. Thus the shaping of friendships is *an art* and this success itself becomes experienced by the friends as delight and exultation.

So far I have traced the reasons why, in comparison to the other praxis-forms, friendship shaping is enormously difficult back to its *internal* delicateness. Democratic praxis is dramaturgically considered an habitually demanding and practically taxing type of acting. Focusing on the external conditions of possibility, the socially consequential implications of the difference between enclosed praxis-forms and democratic praxis become evident. As a matter of fact the external conditions for the realization of particular praxis activities can be enforced subjectively by the practitioners themselves. The outer presuppositions to practice piano playing or cooking are at the practitioners' disposal because in the last instance it is money that constitutes here the possibility to pursue the performing of praxis. One has to have the money for gaining access to a piano or to a decently equipped kitchen.

A second, different presupposition that is essentially not depending on money is defined by the particular temporality each praxis contains. Not at all commercially available, the required time here remains limited to the duration of exercising the activity and consequently this outer presuppositions also remains at the subjective disposal and time-management of the individual. This is the crucial point that both of these external presuppositions are principally at the individual's disposal; they can be individually enforced. In contrary to the possible enforcement by money and personal decision, the external presuppositions of the praxis of friendship can not be enforced, neither by purchasing nor by management.

What makes the democratic sociality of friendship entirely conditioned by its outer societal environment, derives from the inevitable matter that it is dependent on the indisposability of the other as friend and on the accessibility of unrestricted time. The willingness of the others

to become friends of mine always and forever escapes and resists my power: if the others do not respond to my readiness and engagement for friendship, my desire for friendship runs into a void. This void marks the vulnerability of the unsuppressed desire for the other: by affirming my wish and thus my needfulness for the other in engagement for friendship, I simultaneously open up the frustrating void that this longing might be condemned to remain unsatisfied. Of course, there are numerous ways to deal with this dilemma. One of them is to deny the possibility and subsequently the desirability of good friendship.

Anyway, even if I were the most powerful and richest person in the world - the friendship of someone can never be enforced nor purchased. Of course, there exist many cases where friendship is faked under these conditions and where money and power do promote the practicality of friendship. But contrary to other praxis activities the outer presuppositions of friendship relations do not ultimately depend on money but personal affection and engagement. However, what mainly causes the fragility of friendship is *a lack of time*. Unrestricted time as a fundamental constituent, determines to an extreme extent the very possibility of constancy, the constancy and therefore the success of practising relations of friendship. If the outer conditions superimpose a pre-given time to exercise sociability they thereby immediately restrict the performance. Consequently, the conditions of the possibility to shape social relationships autonomously is rendered structurally limited. As a result the individuals are capable only to shape "bad" or superficial friendships. These superficial friendships are not the outcome of a culture of narcissism, but of what *remains left* of the wish and the personal engagement of good friendships under the restricted conditions of everyday life. Those who do care for the autonomous shaping of their good life and who try to realize it, are experiencing the antagonism of the aesthetic of a society, that while opening up the possibility for personal freedom, makes the realization of such autonomy simultaneously impossible. Looking back to the purchased life-style and social narcissism in the postmodern aesthetics of individualized existence, the point about their lack of freedom is not so much that to maintain such a way of living one has to subject oneself to the heteronomy of labour life, but rather that it necessarily exploits the substance of one's well-being without even expressing the suffering of a damaged life (*beschädigten Leben*). The praxis of friendship as the art of living realizes the utopian dimension of postmodern everyday ethics as a *minima moralia* (Adorno).