

PLATE 1



'Friendship' box. Christian Friedrich Zincke, c. 1740.

Enamel and gold, 42 by 52 by 25mm.

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Friendship in Early Modern Philosophy and Science

Vanessa Smith and Richard Yeo

It is now well accepted that ‘collaboration’ and ‘network’ are keywords in academic research management, in *both* the humanities and the sciences. This collection of articles looks at some aspects of the deep history of these notions, focusing on the ways in which collaborative effort was conceived in the natural and political sciences, philosophy, and the creative arts in early modern Europe (c. 1550–1750). In particular, we restore the idea of friendship as fundamental to the ways in which collaboration was imagined and conducted. In each of the texts and contexts examined here, a claim is made for friendship as a crucial aspect of intellectual inquiry. Contributors have aimed to take this claim seriously, and to weigh, variously, the importance of a rhetoric of intimacy within scholarly networks, the relationship between friend and stranger in facilitating intellectual dialogue, the gendered nature of sociability in the learned world, and the circumstances that could render friendship both a necessary and a fraught conduit for cultural exchange.

Friendship has long been a philosophical topos.¹ In Plato’s *Lysis* (c. 380 BC), Socrates encounters Hippothales, who is infatuated with the boy Lysis. Socrates is dismayed to find that Hippothales is confessing his devotion in poetry and song, and offers to demonstrate the superior effect of uncompromising argument in attracting young minds. He engages Lysis and his friend Menexenus in conversation on the subject of friendship, raising and then disposing of propositions until he is forced to admit he is lost for

1 For Graeco-Roman thinking on friendship, see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lynette G. Mitchell, *Greeks Bearing Gifts: The Public Use of Private Relationships in the Greek World, 435–323 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1978); Jean-Claude Fraisse, *Philia: la notion d’amitié dans la philosophie antique: essai sur un problème perdu et retrouvé* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974); John T. Fitzgerald, *Graeco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997); Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

words and has failed to define friendship. Socrates' propositions concern the issue of reciprocity:

which is the friend of which? Is the lover the friend of the beloved, whether he be loved in return or hated; or is the beloved the friend; or is there no friendship at all on either side, unless they both love one another?²

He attempts to balance various similar terms: are the like and the like friends? Or do unlike types attract one another, by a compensatory logic? Does the union of virtue with virtue make for perfect friendship? Is it a question of mutual congeniality? Yet Socrates and his interlocutors are confounded by the sufficiency of putative friends to themselves. Like can add nothing to like; goodness is a kind of wholeness. Worthy friends in fact require nothing else for their completion. Socrates concludes that

If neither the beloved, nor the lover, nor the like, nor the unlike, nor the good, nor the congenial, nor any other of whom we spoke — for there were such a number of them I cannot remember all — if none of these are friends, I know not what remains to be said ... as yet we have not been able to discover what is a friend.³

Socrates is franker than most subsequent philosophers in drawing attention to the limitations of his argumentative powers in defining friendship. Plato's dialogue also inaugurates a long tradition of engagement with the topos of friendship. While Socrates argues explicitly that the integrity of the self renders friendship unnecessary, the dialogue might be said to show that philosophical completeness is only attained between two reflecting and sparring selves. Thus

- 2 Plato, 'Lysis', in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, 5 vols (Oxford: n. pub., 1892), I, 3rd edn, pp. 49–75 (p. 60). For analysis of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies of friendship, see David Bolotin, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: An Interpretation of the Lysis, with a New Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); John M. Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 30 (1977), 619–48; Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, *Plato's Lysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989); Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 45–55; Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).
- 3 Plato, 'Lysis', pp. 74–75.

the dialogic form is itself here integral to the argument; the relationship of genre to thinking on friendship is explored in articles in this issue by Diana Barnes and Elizabeth Eger.

The paradox of friendship, as both occurring between equals, and enabling a completion of the self, is probed in books VIII and IX of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 350 BC). Aristotle divides friendship into three types – the pleasurable, the useful, and the good – and goes on to argue that *philia*, the friendship between equals in virtue, incorporates and subsumes those lesser friendships based around pleasure and use, offering a reciprocal model of friendship. As Ronna Burger has argued, however, Aristotle's thesis shifts in Book IX, where the friend becomes necessary to the self not as reflection, but as the other voice in a dialogic relationship:

The friend was originally designated an *allos autos*, suggesting the replication of myself as an other; as a partner in dialogue he becomes *heteros autos*, forming a pair with me precisely because of the difference that makes him genuinely other. Sharing speeches and thoughts is motivated by and in turn produces an awareness of one's partial perspective or incompleteness: it introduces into friendship the possibility of some kind of longing, which the friendship of the good seemed to preclude.⁴

Thus Aristotle's distinction between *allos autos* and *heteros autos* leads to a paradox: namely, that friendship has the capacity both to constitute and question self integrity. This paradox is crucial to the ways in which classical philosophies of friendship were revived in relation to the intellectual inquiries of the early modern period.

As David Konstan has pointed out, the Roman concept of *amicitia*, unlike the Greek notion of *philia*, has conventionally been understood to have a primarily political significance: political allies were *amici*, forging alliances 'of practical affiliation having nothing to do with real and lasting affection'.⁵ Cicero's *Laelius* (c. 44 BC) seeks to define true friendship against this current of skepticism. It is framed as a dialogue in which Laelius speaks of his relationship with the recently deceased Scipio Africanus. Discussing the motivations of friendship such as this one, Cicero says:

4 'Hunting Together or Philosophizing Together: Friendship and *Eros* in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', in *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*, ed. Eduardo A. Velásquez (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 37–60 (p. 50).

5 *Friendship in the Classical World*, p. 123.

Anyone of the opinion that this feeling emanates from mere inadequacy and is entirely concerned with getting hold of someone who will provide us with things that we should like to get is surely assigning friendship altogether too humble and ignoble an origin ... Indeed, the contrary is true: the *more* confidence a person feels in himself, the stronger his equipment of moral and intellectual gifts will be. And although these are qualities that relieve him of dependence upon others and make him feel completely self-sufficient, they will actually strengthen his capacity for making and keeping friends.⁶

For Cicero, friendship is a moral and intellectual bond. As for Aristotle, worthy individuals do not seek in friendship to gain from each other; however, their friendships nonetheless do effectively complete them, by making manifest their self-sufficiency. This complex balance of self-sufficiency and co-dependence in friendship is figured by Cicero as a form of mirroring: ‘When a man thinks of a true friend, he is looking at himself in the mirror’.⁷ The two subjects in the ideal friendship are identical; not only do fellow citizens have stronger ties than foreigners, and relatives than strangers, but the best friendships are forged through identity of feeling: ‘Friendship may be defined as a complete identity of feeling about all things in heaven and earth: an identity which is strengthened by mutual goodwill and affection’.⁸ For Cicero, the advantages that follow from friendship are flow-on effects from the identity of the participants in friendship.

How was friendship conceived by those who pursued philosophy and the sciences in the early modern period? Did the reflections of the ancients continue to have relevance? In his introduction to *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity* (2000), Preston King contends that philosophical interest in friendship declined: ‘It is a defensible thesis that no major book on friendship has appeared since Cicero, 2000 years ago, and certainly not since Plutarch’s *Dialogue on Love* (the *Amatorius*)’. He goes on to say that

if we concentrate upon major thinkers, ... [then] we immediately detect in the modern figures a sharp divergence from their ancient predecessors, at least in the attention they devote or deny to friendship. Virtually no modern figure – Bacon,

6 ‘Laelius: On Friendship’, in Cicero, *On the Good Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 193.

7 ‘Laelius’, p. 189.

8 ‘Laelius’, p. 187.

Montaigne and Nietzsche (bizarrely) apart – has anything to say about or in praise of the subject. Not Machiavelli, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Hume, Voltaire ...⁹

If this was so, we are looking at a drastic break not only with the legacy of classical writings ('ancient predecessors') but with the preoccupations of the immediately preceding and contemporary generations. A recent bibliography of Elizabethan poetry shows that friendship was one of the most frequently treated moral topics.¹⁰ This is not surprising given the extension in this period of the term 'friend' beyond family, kin, and political allies to more disinterested relationships between individuals.¹¹ It is also now agreed that the late 1500s saw the emergence of neo-Stoicism, exemplified in Justus Lipsius's *De Constantia* (1584), which continued Seneca's reflections on friendship, conversation, and political duty. One manifestation of these developments was renewed focus on the nature of dialogue between close friends, as discussed by both Francis Bacon and Michel de Montaigne. Another, especially for scholars and those of learning, was membership of the Republic of Letters (*Respublica literarum*), that cosmopolitan virtual community sustained by face to face meetings but more so by the circulation of letters, manuscripts,

- 9 'Introduction', in *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, eds Preston King and Heather Devere (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 12–13. Compare the anthologies that trace a tradition from classical authors through medieval writers, such as Augustine and Aquinas, to the 'moderns', including Spinoza, Hobbes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Emerson. See Philip Blosser and Carl Bradley Marshall, *Friendship: Philosophical Reflections on a Perennial Concern* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997); Kuisma Korhonen, *Textual Friendship: The Essay as Impossible Encounter from Plato and Montaigne to Levinas and Derrida* (New York: Humanity Books, 2006); *The Changing Face of Friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*, ed. Eduardo A. Velásquez (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).
- 10 *Elizabethan Poetry*, eds Steven W. May and William A. Ringler, Jr. (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), cited in Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 193.
- 11 Peter Burke, 'Humanism and Friendship in Sixteenth-Century Europe', in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 262–74 (p. 263). See also the chapter by Carolyn James and Bill Kent in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine (London: Equinox, forthcoming).

books, and journals.¹² One of the most famous representatives of this network in its early days was Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), the great French collector and *virtuoso*. Writing about the ethos cultivated by Peiresc and his visitors and correspondents, Peter Miller observes that: ‘The tremendous importance attached to friendship during this period reflects both its role as a haven in a stormy world and its privileged status as a rational relationship’. More specifically, he notes how Peiresc ‘viewed conversation as an intellectual tool’.¹³ The lesson here is that although the major philosophical figures of early modern Europe did not devote systematic treatises to friendship, this concept, with its associated values, played a vital part in the codes of civility and exchange that governed new communities of learning.

We can speculate about the social context that encouraged a renewed consideration of friendship as an element in intellectual exchanges. To risk a generalization, over the period from the end of the Renaissance to the Enlightenment (say, 1600–1750) there was a shift from patronage to institutions as the main supports of learning and discovery. To consider just the sciences and philosophy, Galileo and Thomas Hobbes had to assess the interests and prejudices of their aristocratic patrons (respectively, the Medici princes and the Cavendish family).¹⁴ When some princes established academies, such as the Accademia del Cimento (1657) and the Académie Royale des Sciences (1666), members of these associations needed to consider both patrons and fellow savants. They did so in ways that acknowledged and adapted the rule-bound etiquette of the courts, as presented by Baldassare Castiglione in *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528; English translation by Sir Thomas Hoby, 1561). In these situations, both ancient advice, such as Plutarch’s ‘How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend’ (c. AD 100), and contemporary manuals, such as Stefano Guazzo’s *La Civile conversatione* (1574), were indispensable.¹⁵ Gradually, as these new institutions expanded their European and New World connections

12 See Paul Dibon, ‘Communication in the Respublica Literaria of the 17th Century’, *Res Publica Litterarum*, 1 (1978), 43–55; Anthony Grafton, ‘A Sketch Map of a Lost Continent: the Republic of Letters’, in his *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 9–34.

13 *Peiresc’s Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 11, 43.

14 See Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier: the Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

15 Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. George Tullie (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1878), p. 2.

with the help of the correspondence and travel of their members, the rituals of courtly conduct gave way to the less formal interactions of the Republic of Letters. The classical and humanist concern about how to cultivate the one true friendship was joined, perhaps replaced, by the recognition that multiple friends, acquaintances, and strangers offered great benefits both to sociability and to knowledge.¹⁶ Thus friendship in all its varied and extended forms, often transcending religious and national affiliations, was one relationship through which ideas and information were swapped and debated, intellectual debts incurred and paid, reputations made and broken.¹⁷ In 1697, Pierre Bayle, one of the most famous citizens of the Republic of Letters, gave his view of how it worked:

The Republic of Letters is an extremely free state. The only dominion ('empire') recognized is that of truth and reason; under their auspices, war can be innocently waged on anyone. Friends have to be on their guard against friends, fathers against their children, fathers-in-law against their sons-in-law ... Everyone is both sovereign and answerable in law to everyone else.¹⁸

Two points are worth comment: Bayle did not mention women; and he implied that friendship is important only if it assists the pursuit of truth. With regard to the first point, the question of women's place in the Republic of Letters was complicated by ideas about their capacity for friendship with men. At the close of the seventeenth century, the English philosopher John Norris voiced a common opinion in asserting that because equality was an essential condition of close friendship, even a man and his wife could not be friends.¹⁹ Three articles in this collection (Jacqueline Broad, Diana Barnes, and Elizabeth Eger) focus on some early modern women who dialogued with their male contemporaries and classical forebears in an attempt to model philosophies of female friendship. In turning away from the dominant subjects of friendship

16 Ulrich Langer, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1994), pp. 14–22.

17 See David S. Lux and Harold J. Cook, 'Closed Circles or Open Networks?: Communicating Science at a Distance During the Scientific Revolution', *History of Science*, 36 (1998), 179–211.

18 *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 2 vols (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697), I, entry on Catus; cited and translated in Ian Maclean, 'The Medical Republic of Letters Before the Thirty Years War', *Intellectual History Review*, 18 (2008), 15–30 (p. 15).

19 *A Collection of Miscellanies* (Oxford: John Crosley, 1687), pp. 434–45.

theory, these contributions both supplement and take a different approach from queer theorists who have produced some of the most groundbreaking work on early modern friendship to date. They join the efforts of scholars such as Alan Bray, Lorna Hutson, and Marc Schachter in looking not simply at what friendship connotes but what it denotes, in considering friendship's role in marking the shifting boundary between the lives designated private and public.²⁰ As outsiders to academic institutions and systems of intellectual patronage, women of learning adumbrate philosophies of friendship that counterpoint and illuminate the dominant conventions of the day.

The second point raised by Bayle is also salient: how did the obligations of friendship fit with what we might call the ideal of objectivity? Writing about sixty years after Bayle, Adam Smith tackled this question. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) he claimed that conduct is most effectively regulated in a society composed not of friends but of strangers:

Are you in adversity? Do not mourn in the darkness of solitude, do not regulate your sorrow according to the indulgent sympathy of your intimate friends; return, as soon as possible, to the day-light of the world and of society. Live with strangers, with those who know nothing, or care nothing about your misfortune; do not even shun the company of enemies ...²¹

Smith suggested that within the hierarchy of friend/acquaintance/stranger it is the stranger who best helps the individual to moderate emotion: we compose ourselves best before those with whom we are least intimate. Furthermore, only strangers can be trusted to mirror back an accurate version of the self. The stranger is in this sense a better friend than the friend: 'The conversation of a friend brings us to a better, that of a stranger to a still better temper'.²²

20 Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994); *Love, Sex, Intimacy, and Friendship between Men, 1550-1800*, eds Katherine O'Donnell and Michael O'Rourke (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Marc D. Schachter, *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France* (London: Ashgate, 2008).

21 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 178.

22 Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, p. 178. See also Lisa Hill and Peter McCarthy, 'Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society', in *Challenge to Friendship*, eds King and Devere, pp. 33-49.

The friendships involving non-compatriots or ‘strangers’ speak to this paradox, as well as continuing to pose questions established in classical philosophy: do we find the truest intimacy among those who offer us a reflection of similarity, or complete us in their difference? Three articles in this collection (Luciano Boschiero, Richard Yeo, and Vanessa Smith) might be said to extend Smith’s proposition to the field of scientific enquiry, as well as personal ethics, by looking at unexpected friendships or notions of friendship predicated on the distance or foreignness, rather than the proximity, of the friend. Contact with strangers met on travel, or via letter, could reduce both emotional and intellectual reliance on intimate friends at home. By the late eighteenth century there may have been a further development in which detachment, rather than friendship, became closely linked with the pursuit of knowledge.²³

This special issue considers the role of friendship in the conduct of philosophy and the sciences in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this period, the boundaries between these two large subject areas had not yet crystallized into the disciplines we recognize today. Nevertheless, there was already some expectation that whereas philosophers and mathematicians might work in solitude, physicians, experimental chemists, and natural historians needed to collaborate and share data. It is therefore likely that friendship, and the extent to which it mediated between patronage and institutions, may have varied across disciplines as well as across time and space. Clearly, the six articles gathered here do not pretend to supply a general answer; but they do suggest that careful study of the ways in which ideas of friendship were invoked in practice, in specific contexts, might illuminate an aspect of the ethos of learning in early modern Europe.

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23 By the early 1800s, the quest for objective truth was sometimes thought to require distance not only from friends and family but from one’s inner self. See Lorraine Daston, ‘The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment’, *Science in Context*, 4 (1991), 367–86 (pp. 382–83); Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), Chapter 4.

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