

Editorial comment:

The many meanings of friendship

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Friendship is a subject virtually ignored in Political History. Intuitively we know that friendship involves close relationships. There needs to be affection, caring for each other, some sort of commitment and reciprocity. Friendship is associated with attachment, closeness or intimacy, mutuality, esteem and respect. It requires being loving, supportive, and wishing well. It is about tolerance and putting up with the idiosyncrasies of your friends. Friendship can range from close to cordial, from affinity to rapport. It has been associated with gentle liking or passionate emotion. Friendship has been described in kinship terms: brotherhood or fraternity, and sisterhood. It can be applied to sexual, political and/or business partners, or even relationships between nation states.

Definitions of friendship owe much to the terminology of Ancient Greece. *Philia* is the Greek term most usually translated into English as 'friendship'. *Philia* has been defined as a feeling of mild affection, less intense and less emotional than *eros* which is usually translated as 'love'. Some commentators argue that there is little difference between *eros* and *philia* and both can be used to refer to love affairs that include physical desire and sexual relationships. Or both can be used to describe Platonic friendships as reciprocal loving relationships. Aristotle introduces the term *philia politika*, to represent the sorts of relationships appropriate between citizens. *Xenia* usually translated as 'guest friendship' is a ritualized form of friendship related to the bonds and moral obligations to strangers and citizens of other cities, and has association with the idea of hospitality and rendering assistance to strangers.

The Ancient Romans used the Latin term *amicitia* for friendship to describe a relationship that is more clearly distinguished from *amor*, or love. *Amicitia* does not have sexual connotations, and is used to refer to both personal and political relationships, and in particular is associated with the patron-client relationships that were important in imperial Rome. It describes goodwill in alliances, working cooperatively, not necessarily with warmth and affection, although this could be part of the relationship. *Amicitia* could be used for political advantage, and might be an arena for competition and an opportunity to demonstrate magnanimity.

Medieval Christians used both Greek and Roman words to refer to spiritual friendship. *Agape* has been interpreted as selfless unconditional love, and was used to describe the friendship between man and his god, a triangulated relationship that also made possible virtuous friendships between men. In addition *agape* has been used to describe

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both selfless neighbour love, as well as the love of the enemy. Some commentators believe that *agape* describes the relationship in Christian marriage that permits a moral practice of passionate *eros*. The Latin equivalent of *agape* is *caritas*, often translated as 'charity' or 'generosity' but used in the theological sense to refer to the love of God or love of Christ. For Thomas Aquinas, friendship founded on communication between man and God is *caritas*.

The French revolutionaries advocated friendship as fraternity, along with liberty and equality as part of the construction of a new society. Friendship as solidarity or comradeship has been used to describe the relationship between those involved in political struggles. The concept of civic friendship is used to describe the political relations of citizens in a constitutional democracy where reciprocity between equals can promote the common good. Friendship treaties have been signed between nation states promising perpetual peace and amity and seeking harmonious and reciprocally beneficial relationships.

In modern psychology, relationships are considered to be paramount, and love and friendship as necessary for mental health. This literature defines secular *agape* as altruistic, generous love, where a lover or friend is prepared to sacrifice her/himself for the other. *Storge* is used rather than *philia* to describe affection and friendship that occurs naturally, a quiet compassionate emotion that develops slowly. *Agape* and *storge* are contrasted with *mania*, a maniacal love that is possessive and dependent, with *pragma*, a utilitarian, practical and logical love, and with *ludus*, a playful, not too serious relationship.

Postmodernists and deconstructionists question the generosity of friendship and hospitality, defining friendship more tentatively and with uncertainty, recognizing the paradoxes. Derrida coins terms such as 'aimance' or 'lovence' to try to merge the distinctions between love and friendship. The feminist writer, Janice Raymond coins the term 'gyn/affection' to describe female friendships involving not only fondness and affection, but also the sense of empowerment that she argues female friendships can create.

In this second volume of *AMITY: The Journal of Friendship Studies*, the authors are engaging with some of these concepts and understandings of friendship. Marcel Wissenburg opens up a new area of debate about friendship, examining the relationship between animals and humans to ask whether the closeness and affection between them can be considered friendship, and if it would be just to recognise that animals can also give and receive the mutual benefits of harmonious relationships. The article by Sharde Davis and Tamara Afifi exposes some of the complexities of love and friendship in their study of the effect of female friendship group conversations on the conflict between a friend and her male partner. Fred Guyette looks at how friendship interacts with faith and justice to form the basis for a Christian ethic, and considers the postmodern challenge to the context for Christian friendship. The personal relationships between two pairs of political world leaders is examined by Yuri van Hoef, to identify whether the relationship between Helmut Kohl and

François Mitterrand and that between George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev were indeed friendships.

These articles add to the debate about the many meanings of friendship and continue the contributions to the forum provided by AMITY for the revival of the academic study of friendship from a wide-range of perspectives, disciplines and philosophical interests.