Decolonising friendship

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ABSTRACT: What might it mean to decolonise friendship? This article argues that friendship studies should take 'decolonisation' seriously. To decolonise scholarship means not only to critique the fact that ideas and historiographies deriving from 'Western' thinkers and experiences have informed the basic categories of social and political thought. It also means to challenge the mechanisms that have created the dominant imaginings of friendship. Through the example of writing on friendship in international relations, the article addresses three common assumptions that derive from European tradition: (1) friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and (3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. As a complement or counterpoint, the establishment of a postcolonial friendship studies would draw on a variety of sources to decentre Europe, and articulate alternative ways of thinking based on a variety of traditions of thought. The article draws on Chinese thought to illustrate one such alternative. In contrast to the assumptions made under the European egis, such a view of friendship would build on the premise that: (1) friendship is a central category for theorising global political relations, and should not be primarily understood in binary relation to enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly Other to the Self; and (3) we can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible, and fluid sense of Self. Accordingly, this article proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda for a postcolonial friendship studies, centred on the entwinement of the histories, anthropologies and philosophies of friendship with those of North-South relations.

Keywords: decolonization; Eurocentrism; North-South relations; Chinese thought

Introduction

What would it mean to decolonise friendship? Why is it necessary, how could it be done, and what might a decolonised understanding of friendship look like? This article poses and addresses these questions in an attempt to expand and develop the potential of friendship studies. It seeks to decentre experiences and theories of friendship deriving

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from Europe, and to understand how knowledge deriving from other parts of the world may help us think differently about friendship. It proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda for a postcolonial friendship studies, centred on the entwinement of the histories, anthropologies and philosophies of friendship with those of North-South relations.

This article tackles its question by drawing examples from one lively discipline within friendship studies: international relations (IR). This example shows how a focus on Western experience and thought has simultaneously marginalised friendship from a discipline, and limited its decolonial potential. Theorising, understanding and preventing enmity, war and conflict are often understood to be the core business of the IR discipline (Kaplowitz, 1990; Williams, 2003; Herschinger, 2011). In recent decades a diverse body of scholarship on friendship has emerged to provide a significant counterpoint to this Eurocentric focus, and the often interdisciplinary nature of this work on friendship has enabled marginalised voices and points of resistance to emerge (Smith, 2011a; Berenskötter, 2007; Koschut and Oelsner, 2014; Oelsner and Vion, 2011b; King and Smith, 2007; Devere and Smith, 2010). As this growing field of study has begun to show, and as this article will further demonstrate, friendship has remained vital to the maintenance of the disciplinary *status quo*, in the form of the excluded other of enmity, or its constitutive outside. However, like the IR discipline more generally, this segment of friendship studies has also maintained a heavy focus on Western thinkers and cases, and drawn its underpinning assumptions from these. As a result, the radical potential of friendship studies is not fully realised.

This article advances in three main sections. The first section briefly suggests why we should want to decolonise friendship, and what it might mean to do so in more general terms. The section situates the task of the article in wider understandings of decolonisation.

The second section outlines what I suggest are three common assumptions that have been derived from particular Western ideas and experiences, and that have served to marginalise friendship from disciplinary study. These are the assumptions that: (1) friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and (3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self.

The third section then puts forward a suggestion of what we could (or should) do as well or instead. Learning to appreciate the full richness of friendship beyond the hegemonic assumptions means engaging with resources beyond disciplinary lines, and beyond the Western tradition from which they were generated. The section illustrates one possible path by mobilising Chinese histories, anthropologies and philosophies of friendship. China has a rich history of thinking about friendship through traditions such as Daoism and Confucianism. Knowledge from these traditions has been side-lined by the same IR discipline that has marginalized friendship, which makes them a promising resource for bringing such knowledge back into that disciplinary context. From these traditions, I outline three alternative assumptions that contrast and complement the

assumptions that have emerged from Western tradition. I thus argue that we could begin to theorise global political relations on the assumption that: (1) friendship is a central category for theorising global political relations, and should not be primarily understood in binary relation to enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly Other to the Self; and (3) we can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible, and fluid sense of Self.

The purpose of this article, then, is to pose the question of what it would mean to decolonise friendship. Needless to say, this article does not 'achieve' the decolonisation of friendship. Indeed, it is limited, and it can and should itself be further deconstructed. The article uses examples from IR to show the problem of not engaging with this question, and illustrates a possible alternative that draws on Chinese thought and traditions. However, the article's call goes beyond these examples. It invites the reader to use the logic and reasoning developed here to also reconsider approaches to and understandings of friendship in other disciplines, by asking what decolonising friendship might mean to them.

Crucially, such decolonisation does not call for a dismissal of work that has been done in and about the European tradition. Rather, decolonisation entails further self-reflection and self-awareness of work produced in that tradition, and a critical approach to the hegemony of its epistemologies and ontologies. Such an approach would not only make friendship studies more diverse and representative, it would have the deeper and more fundamental result of equipping it with truly heterogeneous and even heterodox starting positions, themes, and methodologies which would place friendship studies as a truly global endeavour.

Decolonising friendship in and beyond global politics

The call to decolonise friendship instantly provokes questions. Why should we want to decolonise friendship and the study thereof in the first place? What does decolonisation propose to do in a field of study? What would the development of postcolonial friendship studies entail?

At its most basic, 'decolonising' does two things. First, decolonising resituates colonialism, empire, and racism as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where they have been systematically neglected and obscured (Bhambra, 2014; Bhambra et al., 2018). Friendship has had an interesting role to play in perpetuating these forces. On the one hand, friendship has been instrumentalised for the purposes of modern empire. 'Savage' peoples have been portrayed as lacking the high level friendships in which Euro-Americans have been understood to engage (Heuser, 2020), and the notion of 'friendship' has been instrumental in expanding and justifying empires (for example through so called 'friendship treaties' between European colonists and indigenous populations and colonies, see Devere, 2014; Roshchin, 2018). On the other hand, as I will argue below, friendship was marginalised by those same modern imperial forces, and it has been used to resist them. Although often unrecognised and unacknowledged by

scholars, friendships and the notion of a 'society of friends' have been key to struggles against colonial and racial subjugation (Gandhi, 2006; Jensen and King, 2017), and as such, 'friendship' can be understood as 'the lost trope in anti-colonial thought' (Gandhi, 2006: 14). In these and other ways, friendship, colonialism, and decolonisation are already intimately intertwined, and the extrication of one from the other is artificial.

Second, decolonising seeks to articulate alternative ways of knowing and doing (Smith, 2012; Wilder, 2015; Allen, 2016). As I will continue to suggest below, in a world and academy focused on enmity, friendship can in itself constitute an alternative way of thinking about the world (see also Nordin and Smith, 2018a; 2018b). However, I also suggest that we can do more to acknowledge how assumptions deriving from European thought and experiences have limited our attempts to present friendship as an alternative to the *status quo*. Continuing to unpack the way in which colonialism, racism and Eurocentrism have shaped thinking about friendship can pave the way for rethinking our use of the term, and we have much to learn by increased engagement with traditions beyond the global North that have been marginalised from friendship studies to date.

Having said this, decolonisation remains a contested term, and we have good reason to approach it with caution and humility. Some are concerned that misuse and overuse of the term places it at risk of becoming little more than a superficial buzzword (Doharty et al., 2020). Others have suggested that using the term for things other than struggles to reclaim colonized land for dispossessed indigenous populations undermines such decolonization (Tuck and Yang, 2012, see Garba and Sorentino, 2020 for a relevant critique). Furthermore, could it be that it is more appropriate for those scholars who have long had privileged speaking positions as a result of colonization and Eurocentrism to stop lecturing and simply listen? These are all valid concerns. As others have suggested, however, based on shared histories of colonisation, we can collectively contribute to research and practice that provincialize forms of European knowledge production, including from the imperial metropoles (Bhambra et al., 2018). Indeed, research on what Leela Gandhi calls 'the politics friendship' has shown how collaborations between anticolonial activists from the global South and anti-imperial 'westerners' have historically enmeshed to engender a metropolitan anti-colonialism, to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging (Gandhi, 2006).

What, then, would postcolonial friendship studies look like? Crucially, it involves investigating 'the local construction and meaning of those intersections that shape the social realities of friendships', as Heuser does in this volume (Heuser, 2020: 31). He further suggests that a de-colonial approach for friendship studies needs to pay critical attention to the tensions between ideal notions of friendship and the practice thereof, as one may glean, for example, through a focus on the social strategies that societies employ to enforce ideals (Heuser, 2020: 37). Thinking further about the way in which friendship can constitute a method and methodology for pursuing such research is another exciting part of cutting-edge decolonial work in this area (as exemplified by Devere et al., 2020; Heuser, 2020).

As indicated above, to decolonise friendship moreover requires reassessing common definitions of friendship, and its role in the various disciplines within which it is embedded. Simply recovering the histories and experiences of friendship in the global South is not sufficient. The key problem is not that the global South and friendships therein are ignored (though they often are). The key problem is that one particular set of European ideas and experiences of friendship and politics - which is neither representative of the world, nor of 'Europe', 'the West', or the 'global North' - provides the basis for putatively universal concepts and definitions with which we study friendship in both North and South. I thus take this 'Europe', 'West', or 'global North' to be a historically and geographically embedded epistemology, which has significant overlap with an imagined historical and geographical Europe/West/North, but which is not limited to it (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Certainly, much thinking elsewhere, including in the contemporary China that I draw on below, aligns with this epistemological West. As we shall see, the Chinese understanding in which I ground my proposed alternative also has much in common with other marginalised strands of thinking in the geographic West. I therefore take Eurocentrism to indicate a worldview that derives from particular understanding of a particular set of experiences in what has in hindsight been imagined as 'Europe', and which has come to dominate thinking about friendship (more broadly, such thinking may be thought of in terms of 'second problematic thinking' described by Hall and Ames, 1995, or 'Westphalia world' as described by Ling, 2014). The concept of friendship should be freed from the limitations that derive from an over-reliance on European thinkers and experience in the study thereof.

Decolonising friendship I: The case of international relations

Despite its centrality to Ancient thought in both East and West (for example Confucius' Analects, 1940: 1.8, 9.25; Plato, 1956: 75), friendship has remained largely disregarded in today's IR, but for the small but growing field of 'friendship studies' in the discipline (King and Smith, 2007; Berenskötter, 2007; Devere and Smith, 2010; Smith, 2011a; Oelsner and Vion, 2011b; Koschut and Oelsner, 2014). Where there have been recent endeavours to decolonise IR, these have focused on applying decolonial thinking to war and enmity (for example Barkawi, 2016). This is a welcome step, but it is not enough. The effort to decolonise enmity has brought back in the colonised geographical other that traditional IR and war studies have excluded, but has yet to re-open space for its conceptual other: friendship. Therefore, 'decolonising' enmity without re-evaluating the meaning and significance of friendship leaves the job half-done.

In this section, I highlight three assumptions about friendship in IR that derive from a particular set of Western ideas and experiences, and that have served to marginalise friendship from the central position it had in Ancient thought in Europe and elsewhere. These are the assumptions that: (1) friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and (3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. Here, I explain and critique

each assumption in turn. My summary is, by necessity, a sketch that cannot do justice to either contemporary disciplinary or historical diversity (those interested in a fuller accounts may consult a number of excellent review essays, such as Devere and Smith, 2010; Devere, 1999; Oelsner and Vion, 2011b). Nonetheless, this brief introduction to the fate of friendship in dominant political thought will give an indication as to why so many would - erroneously - deem the notion of friendship in IR a marginal or curious concern at best, or a dangerous and nonsensical one at worst.

Assumption One: *Friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity.*

As readers of this journal will be aware, friendship was a key concept of concern to political thinkers in Ancient Europe. In Greco-Roman tradition the link between politics and friendship goes back at least to Pythagoras and Zeno (Thom, 1997; Boys-Stones, 1998). It is found in all the major thinkers; Plato connects friendship to the individual's pursuit of the good, to statesmanship, and the law (Plato, 1987); Aristotle claims it holds cities together (Aristotle, 1999); Cicero views friendship as a precondition for the existence of any state (Cicero, 1991: 88). Friendship to these writers took place between men, it enabled good government, and it was absolutely central to their philosophy. Although they could also consider enmity, friendship was clearly an independent and primary concern. Illustratively, Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics presents two whole books about friendship without mentioning enmity other than in passing (Aristotle, 1999).

This cluster of understandings of friendship, and its centrality to political thought, began to shift with the gradual emergence of modernity in Europe (Smith, 2011b: 15). Where European Ancients tended to understand friendship as a form of rational desire for the good, and thus as integral to the moral growth of the good political citizen, Renaissance thinkers reinterpreted friendship as directed at the particularity of the individual friend. Accordingly, Michel de Montaigne explains that he is unable to express the reason for loving his friend Etienne de la Boétie, other than by asserting: 'Because it was he, because it was I' (Montaigne, 1957 [1580]: essay 28). This understanding of friendship as ultimately emotional, irrational and inexplicable came to displace the Ancient understanding of friendship. With modernity, the understanding of politics also took on a new guise through emergence and bifurcation of the private and public. In a process that is now well rehearsed in the wider history of thought, politics came to be associated with the rational and masculine public sphere, in opposition to the irrational and feminized private sphere. Thus, friendship transformed into what Graham M. Smith calls its 'contemporary-affective' model, which describes a private and emotional relationship between individuals, which is often treated with a degree of hostility or suspicion, and which is not considered to have a political dimension (Smith, 2011b: 21). When moderns came to understand friendship as irrational, emotional and private, it is little wonder that they sought to exclude it from the rational, unemotional and public political sphere for which they claimed to strive. Contemporary-affective friendship came to be seen as a threat to good politics, rather than its precondition. In a curious but

familiar double move, the dominant understanding of friendship that developed with modernity thus relegated friendship to a feminized private sphere at the same time as scholarship on friendship continued to prioritize friendship between men.

As the discipline of IR emerged in Europe and its (former) colonies, it tended to inherit this neglect and marginalisation of emotions, women, friendship and other 'irrational' elements. This marginalisation merged with the particular understanding of the international that was derived from the formation of the modern state system in Europe, in a period marked by wars between Protestants and Catholics around the time of Montaigne's writing (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004). The Treaties of Westphalia that are often said to cement the international state system make numerous references to 'Peace and Amity', 'Peace and Friendship', 'reciprocal Amity', and articulate their aim as a 'Christian and Universal Peace, and a perpetual, true, and sincere Amity' (Treaty of Westphalia, 1648: article 1). As demonstrated by Evgeny Roshchin's work on international friendship treaties, 'friendship was one of the central concepts in political theory at the constitutive moment of the modern international system', because it 'facilitated the crystallization of the concept of sovereignty' and served as 'the key instrument in providing international order and in making this order intelligible' (Roshchin, 2006: 599-600). Thus, the treaties of Westphalia offered signatory states the possibility of friendship with formally equal others, as an alternative to negating and destroying them. Yet this friendship between sovereigns was quickly tied in a constitutive relationship to enmity. Shortly after the Treaties of Westphalia, Thomas Hobbes suggested that those who lack a common enemy quickly descend into war amongst themselves (Hobbes, 1996 [1651]: ¶ 17.4). Thus, no friendship within the state without enmity outside of it. The Ancient urge to know the friend from the enemy became the core business of the modern state, but now with the emphasis on vanquishing or neutralising the enemy. Enmity became the key concern, as hard borders were drawn up to exclude enemies to the state's outside, in an effort to establish sovereignty inside. As that state system spread around the globe through colonial conquest, it brought with it those European categories for understanding it, as well as their focus on enmity and their suspicion of difference (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004).

The imprint on today's IR of this bifurcation of friendship and enmity is particularly notable through the disciplinary influence of Hobbes, and of his follower Carl Schmitt. Schmitt infamously claims that 'the specific distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy' (Schmitt, 1996 [1927, 1932]: 19, 26). For a thinker who takes the friend as a central category, it is remarkable that there is virtually no discussion of its nature or features (Smith, 2011a; 2011b: 18). Instead, the distinction between friend and enemy is left to a decisionist logic, where the identification of the enemy (and thus, implicitly, the friend), 'can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgement of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party' (Schmitt, 1996 [1927, 1932]: 27). Friendship, in this equation, is simply the residue of enmity, the absence of what the sovereign has decided is an existential threat. Friendship acts as the indispensable Other to enmity, or its constitutive outside. What is

more, Schmitt further crafts his text in such a way that this 'empty' and undefined friendship group becomes coterminous with sameness and homogeneity (Smith, 2011a). Although dominant strands of IR theory have rejected Schmitt's equation of that homogenous friendship group with ethnicity (in his case, in service of the German *volk* and the Third Reich), the notion of the state border as dividing inside sameness from outside difference has continued to dominate the discipline (Walker, 1993). So too has his focus on enmity. The binary distinction of friend and enemy, with emphasis on the latter, is now a staple of IR scholarship on international anarchy, provision of help, and alliances (for example in Morgenthau, 1972; Wolfers, 1962; Waltz, 2000).

What we are left with at this particular point of the historical trajectory of friendship in IR is a discipline dominated by a particular interpretation of European history. This discipline has largely forgotten the importance of friendship to politics that was so central to the European Ancients, and about the theorisation of bonds between subjects and states that it used to enable. On the one hand, friendship has been associated with the emotions, the irrational, the feminine, and the private. As such friendship is viewed as marginal or even threatening to a dominant view of politics characterised as unemotional, rational, masculine, and public. On the other hand, friendship has been read through the sovereign inside/outside logic of the modern state system, where it has survived only as the residual other of enmity. Both treatments of friendship have contributed to its marginalization from politics and IR – and both treatments rest on concerns, categories, and assumptions crafted in the crucible of Europe.

Assumption Two: *Friends need to be significantly similar to the Self.*

Although friendship has appeared a marginal concern to dominant strands of IR scholarship, a small but growing field of friendship studies has drawn resources from across a range of disciplines to conceptualize friendship as a central category for rethinking IR. Given the modern Western neglect of friendship as a political term (and the ensuing scarcity of sources), it is unsurprising that many of those who have tried to revive the concept have turned to their Ancient European predecessors for intellectual resources. In particular, Aristotle's discussion of friendship has become paradigmatic to the emerging field of friendship studies in IR (for examples of IR literatures that draw on his definition, see Berenskötter, 2007: 664-668; Heimann, 2012: 28-29; Digeser, 2009a: 329-331; 2009b; Onuf, 2009; Lu, 2009: 41, 43-47; Patsias and Deschênes, 2011: 94; Schwarzenbach, 2011: 28, 31).

One of the most important ways in which Aristotle's conceptualisation of friendship has influenced this literature is the adoption of his view that the friend is 'another self' (Aristotle, 1999: 1166a1133, 1170b1167, drawn on in IR by, for example, Digeser, 2009a: 331, 339; Lu, 2009: 47-48; Berenskötter, 2007: 664). This understanding derives from his notion of 'true' friendship, which is based on the friends' shared understanding of what is 'right' or 'virtuous'. As such, the love of the friend is an extension

of self-love: the friends love the good that they find in their own self and the self of the other (Aristotle, 1999: book VIII, 1, 2 and 3). Of course, simply relying on Aristotle is not Eurocentric in and of itself, and his conceptualization can be interpreted in numerous ways. However, scholarship on friendship in IR has widely adopted a modern Western permutation of this understanding that emphasizes similarity, in terms of shared history, values, character, identity, 'sense', or commitment to a common project (for example Berenskötter, 2007: 670; Digeser, 2009a: 331; 2009b: 30; Oelsner and Vion, 2011b: 4; Constantin, 2011: 112-113; Heimann, 2012: 30; Berenskötter and van Hoef, 2017). In this emphasis, these literatures have echoes of aspects of the Schmittian understanding of friendship introduced above (which is not to say that they endorse other aspects or implications of his writing).

Aristotle's understanding of the friend as 'another self' has been famously criticized by one of the other key thinkers of friendship in Western tradition, Jacques Derrida (1997). Derrida shares Aristotle's concern for developing friendship as a way to think about our need to relate *with* others. However, his text suggests that Aristotle's understanding of the true friend as another version of oneself fails to adequately recognise the friend as an Other, 'who can always be singular and who must remain so in a certain way' (Derrida, 1994: 380). If the love of the friend is a mere extension of self-love, then my relationship is with a narcissistic projection of myself and not with the 'singularity of the other as other' (Derrida, 1994: 381). This 'singular' aspect of the other can be described as 'that which remains irreducible to any established concept, code, system or generality', but which nonetheless marks itself by the promise of its repeatability (Wortham, 2010: 190). Aristotle's account of friendship, on Derrida's view, merges Self and Other into a 'total construct' that ignores this Otherness of the friend. This in turn reduces our ability to get at the genuine relationality of the friends, where friendship emerges in between the friends, rather than from the one Self (Derrida, 1997: 11, see also Romero-Iribas and Smith, 2019 for a discussion of the idea of the separateness of friends).

Derrida's privileging of Europe and democracy as the only system that can welcome Otherness and thus has a future 'to come' certainly leaves much to desire for a decolonial project in IR (Nordin, 2016b). Indeed, perhaps this raises questions about the limits of Derrida's usefulness to the decolonial project *per se*. Nonetheless, Derrida's analysis of Aristotelian friendship offers a critique to the literatures on friendship in IR. As I have shown above, they repeatedly draw on Aristotle in a way that emphasises sameness and neglects the importance of difference. Perhaps as a consequence of this conceptualisation, the tendency in the literatures on friendship has been to privilege liberal, Western, democratic forms of friendship, or friendship between states that are similarly liberal, Western and democratic. So, for example, Digeser (2009b: 23) defines international friendship as a particular kind of association between states that are liberal, in the Rawlsian sense; Patsias and Deschênes (2011: 97, 99-100) see it enabled by shared liberal culture in US-Canadian friendship; and Oelsner and Vion (2011a: 129-130) see its significance in turning regions from enmity to economic and political integration in Latin America and Europe.

The danger, then, of drawing on Aristotle is that sameness comes to obscure difference – and genuine otherness becomes both destabilising and unrecognisable. To illustrate what often happens when the possibility of genuine Otherness is introduced we can look at two examples. The first is drawn from the theoretical realm, through the work of Alexander Wendt. The second is drawn from the practice of IR, specifically the use of friendship talk in interstate politics and colonisation. Wendt's work is especially interesting as he is one of the few scholars to find an explicit and extended place for friendship in his theory (Wendt, 1999). Wendt rejects the notion that the anarchic structure of the international system dictates that states must treat one another as enemies. Instead, he argues that their behaviour will depend on the cultures of anarchy that states shape in relation to one another, and in which states can take on the role as either enemy, rival or friend. Wendt stresses that these roles can only exist in the context of shared culture. In the imagined 'first encounter' between Cortés and Moctezuma, where the two are truly Other to one another, Wendt argues that there can be no culture, and by extension no friendship (Wendt, 1999: 158). This betrays that the friendship he imagines is not, as he claims, a relationship between Self and Other, but rather between Self and (another) Self (Nordin and Smith, 2018b). It is only when the Other (the unfathomable Moctezuma and his Aztecs) is turned into another Self (a Spanish colony and later the United States of Mexico) that it can become a friend of the colonizing European states.

If we now turn to an illustration from practice, the diplomatic language of friendship has been particularly prevalent to describe relations between states or groups of vastly different size, resource, or relative power, and especially colonial relations (Roshchin, 2009: 76; 2017; Devere et al., 2011: 64). For example, 'friendship treaties' were one of the principal tools for building and maintaining the British Empire between the 17th and 19th centuries (Roshchin, 2009; 2017), and for dividing occupied territories between dominating colonial powers in the 20th century (for example in the 1939 German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty that outlined the fifth partition of Polish territory between the German Reich and the USSR, see Devere et al., 2011: 57). More generally, it was common for European and North American colonial powers to cement their domination of aboriginal peoples through such 'friendship' in places like North America and the Pacific, leading scholars to conclude that the rhetoric of friendship 'is more a tool of public relations and spin, rather than diplomacy and peace-building' (Devere et al., 2011: 46). Though such friendship between coloniser and colonised often involved extending certain rights to indigenous people (rights which may or may not be upheld), it was never the same kind of friendship that was extended between states in European international society and that recognized equal statehood (Onuf, 2013: 130-133). Rather, legal thinking at the time demanded that the colonised reach an ever-shifting 'standard of civilization' before their sovereignty could be recognized, and they could enter the kind of formally equal friendship that was extended between states in (European) 'international society' (Koskenniemi, 2002: 136; Roshchin, 2017). Before the colonised could become 'true friends' in the Aristotelian sense, if indeed that was ever possible, they had to change to be more like the Western Self.

In summary, insofar as scholars draw on Aristotle's notion of the friend as another self, and insofar as they emphasise similarity of the friends, there is a tendency to underplay notions of difference and Otherness. This is not to say that these scholars are not critical (because they are), but there is a tendency to settle within, rather than break free from, a set of wider European assumptions that has difficulties grappling with Otherness. Such thinking is moreover mirrored in the deployment of friendship as a tool for building and maintaining colonial and neo-colonial global relations. What has been lost in the process is an understanding and appreciation of the Otherness of the friend, whether Western, Eastern, or something entirely different.

Assumption Three: *Friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self.*

The emphasis on similarity in friendship outlined above is further reflected in the common notion that friendship is defined by identification or recognition (Heimann, 2012: 30; Digeser, 2009b: 30; Lu, 2009: 41; Berenskötter, 2007: 664; Patsias and Deschênes, 2011: 96). This identification or recognition figures prominently in normative arguments about what makes friendship positive or desirable. In such arguments, friends are understood to be valuable because they affirm the Self. For example, Digeser argues that friendship is valuable because a friend can act like a mirror for the self, and therefore help the self to gauge its success or otherwise of living up to the values or characteristics for which the friends share an admiration (Digeser, 2009a: 339-340). Lu similarly argues that friendship is different from comradeship because friendship involves 'a heightened awareness of the self' as opposed to 'the suppression of self-awareness in comradeship' (Lu, 2009: 48, referring to Gray, 1970: 90). In a similar vein, Smith and Devere's overview of friendship highlights how friendship networks of black women, 'from ancient African societies to the Sisterhoods that sustained slave communities to the women's networks of the 1990s ... advance a woman's sense of self and offer armour against oppression' (Devere and Smith, 2010: 350, citing Norment, 1996: 88 and Houston and Davis, 2002: 150).

The idea that friends are valuable because they affirm one's self-awareness and sense of stable Self is particularly accentuated in recent literatures interested in the 'ontological security' of states. Felix Berenskötter's work is leading in this area. Drawing on Heidegger, he suggests that the human condition is defined by existential anxiety, provoked by humans' inability to ever know themselves in their entirety or know what the future holds (Berenskötter, 2007: 655). This anxiety, he suggests, makes states search for what Anthony Giddens calls 'anxiety-controlling mechanisms' employed to gain 'ontological security', or 'a stable sense of Self' (Berenskötter, 2007: 656, referring to Giddens, 1984: 50). This 'stabilisation of the Self' is achieved through ordering practices with others (Berenskötter, 2007: 657), specifically through friendships that 'help to sustain the individual's sense of self by treating [it] particularistically' (Berenskötter, 2007: 664, citing Allan, 1989: 62).

Like many other literatures on friendship, Berenskötter relies on Aristotle to explain that a shared understanding of what is 'right' means that 'the true friend takes on the role as "another Self" and the bond between friends an extension of self-love' (Berenskötter, 2007: 666). He highlights two features of such friendship. First, true friendship is recognised by a particular kind of reciprocity, which serves both friends as 'a mean to further and display virtue and reach "inner harmony" (i.e. tame anxiety) and is characterised by the fact that friends "wish good to each other for each other's own sake"' (Berenskötter, 2007: 666). Second, this reciprocity is said to be intrinsically linked to friendship as a relationship among 'equals'. This, he argues, is because Aristotle's true friendship among those similar in virtue, where the friend perceives the Other as 'another Self', cannot conceive of this Other as inferior or superior (Berenskötter, 2007: 667, referring to Aristotle, 1999: book 8, 3). Berenskötter also notes the Derridean critique of Aristotelian friendship outlined in the previous section, which leads him to conclude that 'in order to conceptualize friendship as a relationship in which politics occurs, friendship relations must allow for heterogeneity and be conceived through a philosophy of difference' (Berenskötter, 2007: 668).

Making room for difference in this manner is certainly important, but I suggest that taking the Derridean critique seriously leads us to recognize that such difference, as opposed to radical Otherness, is ultimately premised on a projection of the Self (see Nordin and Smith, 2019 for an elaboration on this difference). On Berenskötter's understanding, the friend needs to be different and separate from the Self in order to function as a sounding-board or mirror that can provide a 'slightly different' perspective to stimulate learning and affirm the Self from the outside (Berenskötter, 2007: 671-672). However, I suggest that if this is the case then the states connected by such friendship do not simply pursue their friendship 'for each other's own sake'. Rather, they end up preoccupied with their own imagined Self – and their own sense of a *coherent and stable* Self at that. As I have begun to indicate in previous sections of this article, striving for such a stable Self is bound up with a particular European experience of state formation (the creation of a safe and stable sovereign inside by identifying a hostile and destructive enemy in an anarchic and lawless outside), and it has been part and parcel of the emphasis on enmity in IR.

Two things are lost in this equation. The first is the appreciation and accommodation of a more profound Otherness or alterity of the Other, as indicated in the previous section. Berenskötter sees the friend as valuable because it acts as what his constructivism terms a 'significant Other' (Berenskötter, 2007: 661), but which looks more like a marginally different Self. Like Wendt, Berenskötter's understanding of the friend as 'another Self' illustrates not a relationship between Self and Other, but between Self and Self. Like Wendt, Berenskötter understands friendship as based on sharing a 'common world', rather than aiming to accommodate or appreciate multiple worlds (Berenskötter, 2007: 670, 672). The second thing that is lost, as a consequence of the first, is the appreciation and accommodation of a more profound Otherness or alterity of the Self, even if it is understood as incomplete and 'becoming'. On Berenskötter's understanding,

the fact that we cannot ultimately know ourselves entirely is a source of profound and irresolvable anxiety, a fact with which we can never be at peace.

In recent writing, Berenskötter has returned to re-examine this conservative impulse in thinking about ontological security. He has proposed that a more radical form of agency, which celebrates instability and discontinuity, can possibly be incorporated into the framework of ontological security by either embracing or suspending anxiety. He entertains the alternative route of an agency that embraces ontological insecurity and the incomplete nature of being. Until a framework in this vein is built, he concludes, the question of radical agency shakes the intellectual foundations of scholarship building on the notion of ontological security (Berenskötter, 2020). Elsewhere, he also points out the benefits analysts can expect from going beyond the Western context to 'enhance their conceptual toolbox' in the study of friendship (Berenskötter and van Hoef, 2017). Below, I aim to outline one way of responding to both of these calls by Berenskötter, with an eye to developing an alternative ontology of friendship by going beyond the Western context.

To summarise the argument to this point, a particular way of understanding friendship has made it appear a marginal concern to the IR discipline, the feminised residue of the more important enmity. This understanding has emerged from a particular interpretation of a particular set of historical European experiences and ideas. Amongst the few literatures that take friendship in IR seriously as a positive force or conceptual tool, the bulk also draw on European or Western theorists, cases and concepts. Most notably, they praise friendship because of its ability to affirm states' self-identity, or because of its alleged tendency to value and reproduce a certain level of sameness or similarity. As such, they reproduce the same desire for internal coherence and anxiety about uncertainty and Otherness that produced the European focus on state enmity in the first place. In this way, the promise that friendship might offer an alternative to the methodological individualism that has dogged Western thought is compromised by the fact that so many literatures on political friendship nonetheless end up valuing friendship precisely because it is taken to affirm the individual Self and heighten self-awareness. This understanding may be able to accommodate a certain level of difference, but it struggles to recognise genuine Otherness or more radical alterity. It can only build on a shared world, rather than appreciate and accommodate multiple worlds. As such, friendship seems limited as a trope, concept, or theory for a decolonial project.

Decolonising friendship II: Possible alternative assumptions

The previous section of this article has traced the emergence and consequences of a particular way of understanding friendship in IR, which derives from a particular understanding of a particular set of European ideas and experiences. Its assumptions stipulate that: (1) friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and (3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. In the remainder of this article, I begin to elaborate one

possible alternative or complement to the dominant European understanding of friendship in IR. I draw on Chinese traditions of thought to suggest three alternative points of departure for decolonising friendship, stipulating that: (1) friendship is a central category for theorising global political relations, and is not best understood in binary relation to enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly Other to the Self; and (3) we can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible, and fluid sense of Self.

Alternative assumption One: *friendship is a central category for theorising global political relations, and is not best understood in binary relation to enmity.*

The binary distinction of friends and enemies, and the obsession with the latter, is certainly visible in contemporary Chinese foreign policy, popular culture, and IR scholarship (see Zhao Tingyang, 2005 and 2006: 34 for examples, and Brady, 1997; 2003; Callahan, 2004: 214-215 or 2010: 1, 28, 48, 189, 209, for critiques). However, as in the Western tradition, the dominance of this binary thinking appears to have emerged only with China's integration into the international state system as a 'semi-colony'. Like the European Ancients, Chinese thinkers took friendship as a key political category in its own right – the term 'friend' or 'friendship' (*peng* 朋, *you* 友, or *pengyou* 朋友) appears 27 times in 17 passages in Confucius' *Analects* (1940), and 30 times in 11 passages in the *Mencius* (2003). Most famously, perhaps, Confucian thinking takes friendship as one of the five relationships that are foundational for good society, alongside the bonds of mutual obligation between father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife, and older and younger brother. On the one hand, friendship could be supportive of the other four family-state relationships, where the good friend might both offer respite from their demands and act as a virtuous example to emulate in order to become a better son, a better official, and a better subject (Kutcher, 2000). On the other hand, some argue that it offered the space for an alternative and more egalitarian civility that could challenge family and state hierarchies (Kutcher, 2000; Callahan, 2004: 213). On both interpretations, friendship in this tradition denotes precisely that which has been marginalized by modern Western IR, namely the mutually implicating bonds and good will between persons and groups that are not mandatory, contractual, or based on a shared bloodline.

Importantly, this friendship that is central to Chinese political thought is typically understood in a framework that stresses fluidity, flexibility and change – the stress is on 'making friends', to indicate an active negotiation of contingent relations (*Analects*, 1940: 16/14; Callahan, 2004: 213). Such an approach re-centres the relations of international relations, in what has been discussed elsewhere as a Chinese 'relational ontology' as opposed to a Western 'ontology of things' (Zhao Tingyang, 2006: 34; Nordin and Smith, 2018b). This contingent relationality is given particular emphasis in Daoist thought, which is expressed in concrete everyday practices such as cooking and traditional Chinese medicine, and which has inspired exciting new developments in IR theory in the last decade or so. For example, the famous advocate of a 'Chinese school' of IR theory, Qin Yaqing, has proposed a version of friendship relations (*guanxi* 关系) that he illustrates

with the Daoist *yin-yang* (阴阳) symbol (Qin Yaqing, 2009: 9; 2016: 39). This symbol consists of a black and a white half that together form a circle. There is a black dot in the white, and a white dot in the black.

Figure 1: *Yin-yang* (Wikimedia commons, 2012).

If the broader span of Chinese traditions demonstrates that friendship was understood without binary contrast to enmity, the *yin-yang* diagram indicates that this Chinese tradition operates without binary distinction more generally. To Qin, Western thought tends to understand A and non-A as irreconcilable because they have essentially different properties, even if they are taken to interrelate in a Hegelian-style dialectic. By contrast, on Qin's understanding of what he terms a 'Chinese dialectic', A can be non-A or include non-A. The process of relationships transforms the behaviour and the essential properties of actors involved, so that A can transform non-A or be transformed into non-A. In this way, *yin-yang* relationality 'denies the dichotomously structured concept of "thesis vs. anti-thesis" or "us vs. them"' (Qin Yaqing, 2016: 40). Elsewhere, David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames also explain such a relationality in terms of non-binary contrast:

Yin and *yang* are not, as is so often claimed, dualistic principles of light and dark, male and female, action and passivity, where light and dark exclude each other, logically entail each other, and in their complementarity constitute a totality. Rather *yin* and *yang* are, first and foremost, a vocabulary of qualitative contrasts which are applicable to specific situations, and which enable us to make specific distinctions (Hall and Ames, 1995: 261).

Following from this understanding, *yin* and *yang* characterize particular relationships, and entail a perception from some particular perspective that enables one to unravel patterns of relatedness and to interpret specific circumstances. It is only through a process of generalization that for example gender traits constructed as feminine and masculine have been construed as predominantly *yin* and *yang* respectively, and the contrast essentialized (Hall and Ames, 1995: 261). That is not to say that Chinese tradition has not been patriarchal – it certainly has (Wolf, 1994). However, it indicates that the conceptual framework itself has less in common with theories that reify or seek to affirm such binaries, and is more akin to those postcolonial, poststructuralist, feminist and queer theoretical approaches that focus on deconstructing them and demonstrating their contingency.

Qin's *guanxi* relationality, and the tradition on which he draws, thus encourages us to understand friendship as a central political category in its own right. Friendship is not

understood as the feminised and residual term in a binary distinction of friend and enemy. This tradition encourages us to understand friendship as a relative and contingent term, a processual, partial and incomplete doing rather than a fixed and complete identity.

Alternative assumption Two: *Friends need to be significantly Other to the Self.*

If it is true, as I have just argued, that pre-modern Chinese thought in general, and Daoist thought in particular, steers us away from a binary construction of absolute difference, we may be concerned that it risks denying or neglecting the more radical Otherness or singularity that I have suggested gets lost in dominant Western conceptions of friendship in IR. In this section, however, I want to suggest that where Western traditions have come to stress sameness, similarity, or a shared project as foundational for friendship, Chinese traditions suggest that the point of being with other people is that they are not you. As I have argued above, this view is accommodated in standard Western understandings of friendship to the extent that they appreciate a limited degree of difference in the friend, but this is different from accommodating or appreciating singular Otherness.

At first glance, some Chinese thought certainly appears to share the self-centered understanding of the world that I have detected in Western thinking, particularly in the Confucian notion of self-love (*zi'ai* 自爱) as a characteristic of true enlightenment, which recalls the Aristotelian foundation of friendship (*Xunzi*, 1966: 105.129.129; Hall and Ames, 1998: 258). Furthermore, like Aristotelian notions of friendship, Confucian thought has placed significant emphasis on self-cultivation (*xiuji* 修己 in *Analects*, 1940: 14/42, 14/15, 15/13; or *xiushen* 修身 in *Mencius*, 2003: 7 A/1, 7 A/9, 7 B/32; Hall and Ames, 1995: 190-191), so that one might act as an exemplar for others to emulate. Elsewhere, I have criticised contemporary Chinese scholars who deploy such notions of 'exemplarity' in IR for repeating the colonial imagination of Others as 'behind' the exemplary Self that they criticise in Western thought (Nordin, 2016a; 2016b). In the original source texts, however, the 'self' to which both these propositions refer is markedly different from that encountered in Aristotle's writing. As Hall and Ames have argued at length, the 'self' here is not an 'ego-self', but 'an incipient, inchoate self that is radically situational, and hence reflexive' (Hall and Ames, 1998: 259). Confucian self-love therefore does not refer to an ego-self, but to an entire field of concerns of self and Other. In the *yin-yang* diagram, the white dot in the black and the black dot in the white indicate what in postcolonial terms may be called 'the Other in the Self' or 'intersectionality'. There is no scope in this relational thinking to imagine a Self that exists prior to or independently from (partially) known and unknown others, including friends. There can be no prior self to be narcissistically imagined or replicated in the friend.

This in turn entails a very different sense of 'sharing'. As we have seen, the Aristotelian influence on the Anglophone body of friendship studies in IR has meant that authors typically understand (good) friendship in terms of a shared project, a recognition of one's own (often liberal) values in the other. On such a view, friends are good because

they are similar to the self in this way, and can therefore support self-realisation, self-cultivation, and self-affirmation. As Hall and Ames (1995: 191) have argued, Aristotelian associations with the cultivation metaphor conjure forth a potentiality/actuality distinction that is not appropriate for understanding the Chinese traditions that are under discussion here. That distinction is fundamentally progressive, since it entails an efficient, formal, and final cause that shapes the self. Such teleology instrumentalizes, decontextualizes, and dehistoricizes the process of self-cultivation, negating the singularity of both Self and Other in the process. The original Confucian model of self has much greater flexibility and creative range because of the degree to which it is free of any specified goals – it can only be described through post hoc generalizations. What friends share is, in this sense, a creative interpretative endeavour without the necessity of a shared end or aim of that endeavour.

This understanding of relationality is then slightly different to that offered by Qin, who emphasises that thesis and antithesis (A and non-A, *yin* and *yang*) complement one another to make a harmonious and holistic whole (Qin Yaqing, 2009: 9; 2016: 39). Hall and Ames, by contrast, stress the inadequacy of the analogy between the logical relationship of A and non-A on the one hand, and the contrast of *yin* and *yang* on the other, partly because the latter does not entail the self-containment, completeness, or totality implied in the former (Hall and Ames, 1995: 261). This means that the world understood through *yin-yang* relationality is not a single-ordered world. There is no such thing as a cosmos, manifesting unity and coherence, but Daoist thought invokes an understanding of a 'world' constituted by the ten thousand things. The presence (*you* 有) and absence (*wu* 無) of Chinese thought is only a 'language of presence' in the sense of 'a language of "making present" the item itself, not its essence' (Hall and Ames, 1995: 227-228). Put differently, Daoist thought expressed in Chinese language does not need to posit an ontological difference between Being and beings, only between one being and another. In Hall and Ames' terms, 'the mass of classical Chinese philosophical discourse … is already deconstructed' (Hall and Ames, 1995: 306, endnote 94 to chapter 3). They therefore suggest that the notion of difference operating in Chinese thought has much in common with Derrida's notion of *différance*, but that the former is better approximated if one includes in the equation the homonymic 'defer', meaning 'to yield', so that the resultant notion of difference connotes both active and passive senses of differing and of deferring (Hall and Ames, 1995: 228). As such, this Chinese process-thinking can provide a resource for developing a language of difference, otherness and plurality sought by the type of Derridean critique that we have seen developed in relation to Aristotelian notions of friendship.

In this way, Daoist thought offers a potent alternative to those visions of friendship that would see the friend becoming more like the self, as seen in the friendship treaties of Western colonial conquest or in contemporary suggestions that civilized China should turn barbarian enemies into friends by providing a benevolent example to emulate. Here, the point of departure is instead a radically relational ontology where self-cultivation

through friendships is a creative endeavour without defined end, which is focused on yielding to the unpredictable singularity of the friend.

Alternative assumption Three: *We can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible, and fluid sense of Self.*

In my outline above of the current treatment of friendship in IR, my final point of critique focused on the way the self-centred Aristotelian understanding of friendship is developed in the particular strand of literature that draws on the notion of 'ontological security'. I took Berenskötter's argument that friends calm existential anxiety to exemplify the assumption that friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. His understanding of anxiety as fundamental to being is a cornerstone of thinking through ontological security, including in its application to Chinese IR (Pan, 2014: 455-456; Gustavsson, 2016). Although such anxiety is typically understood to mark all selves in equal measure, Shih Chih-yu has suggested that one of the things that distinguishes the specifically Chinese relational turn in IR is its focus on anxiety rather than passion (Shih Chih-yu, 2016).

It is worth noting here that the Heideggerian understanding of the Self that forms the basis for Berenskötter's argument is strikingly similar to the Daoist 'incipient, inchoate self' introduced in the previous section. On my understanding, both view the Self as an always incomplete process of becoming, where neither the Self, nor any understanding of it, can ever be one, whole, or finally inclusive (Hall, 1994: 230). What makes the Daoist understanding of the Self and its friends radically different to Berenskötter's Heideggarian conceptualization is the absence of anxiety as a fundamental and unavoidable part of such a condition. In Daoist tradition, 'the unthinkable or ineffable must be conceived of not as conditioned by privation or negation, but as being located within the movement of differentiation which is by nature positive and creative' (Silantsyeva, 2016: 355).

I therefore propose that we consider the possibility that anxiety may be very much part of the colonial *problematique*, but that decolonising friendship in and beyond IR would involve valuing friendship within and between incipient, inchoate subjects that recognize the Other in both themselves and one another without existential anxiety. We may begin such contemplation by recognizing the colonial and postcolonial anxieties that L. H. M. Ling has identified in her discussion of the Dao of world politics (Ling, 2014). Ling argues that 'mainstream approaches' to IR, including realism, liberalism and Wendtian constructivism, constitute a hegemonic vision of IR that she calls 'Westphalia World', and that is defined by the same dichotomizing Eurocentric assumptions that I have argued marginalized friendship as a concern in IR scholarship. Such thinking, she suggests, 'perpetrates a profound violence' by denying its reliance on those it excludes, as well as their knowledges and ways of knowing, what she calls 'Multiple Worlds'. As a result of such separation and violence, Ling describes how a '"postcolonial anxiety" festers in Multiple Worlds that, in turn, aggravates a "colonial anxiety" in Westphalia World' (Ling,

2014: 3). This leads to a nihilistic logic where the lives of others need to be forfeited in order to save one's own. In other words, enmity comes to dominate the agenda of IR.

Ling offers a 'worldist' alternative to that anxious worldview focused on enmity, in the form of a Daoist dialectic similar to Qin's. Ling writes that in such a Daoist dialectic the 'complementarities (*yin*) prevail despite the contradictions (*yang*) between and within the polarities. Nothing remains static or the same' (Ling, 2014: 15). This worldview strives to re-centre contributions to world politics that have been marginalised from it, and to conceptualise these as having ontological parity with Westphalia world. It is thus a response to the negative spiral of enmity and anxiety in the relation between Westphalia World and Multiple Worlds:

> A *dao* of world politics propels us from this dilemma. In recognizing the ontological parity of things, a post-Westphalian IR experiences the constant potential of creative transformations due to the mutual interactions that transpire, especially between opposites. Multiplicity and difference manifest, enacted by local agents and their transformations of knowledge (Ling, 2014: 3).

This approach contrasts markedly to Wendt's worldview, where friendship is only possible between those who have the same cultural view of the world. Ling instead emphasizes a recognition of the complexity of the self, which includes traces or elements of the other in the self. Intimacy, rather than autonomy, marks its condition (Ling, 2014: 12). On the same logic, the point is not to replace Westphalia World with Multiple Worlds, just as the point is not for the postcolonial friendship studies I propose to supersede other friendship studies, in IR or elsewhere, or to replace studies of war and enmity. Rather, the Daoist dialectic urges us to move closer towards balance and engagement. In Ling's terms, '[f]ortified with Daoist dialectics, worldism re-visibilizes Multiple Worlds in relation to one another as well as to Westphalia World' (Ling, 2014: 18). Equally, we might say that it makes multiple kinds of friendship beyond the West visible again, both in relation to one another and in relation to the enmity-driven IR discipline that has denied them. The area of intersection between different approaches forms a dialogical space. However, unlike the Socratic dialogue on friendship, Daoist dialectics do not presuppose that there is a stable and discoverable truth independent of human perspectives (Ling, 2014: 66).

Ling's insistence on this contrapuntuality between West and Rest, Self and Other, 'to jointly produce the complicities that endure despite and sometimes because of the mutual conflicts that tear them apart' adds an important emphasis to Qin's account (Ling, 2014: 45). Qin is clearly aware that the processual constructivism he advocates is not uniquely Chinese, that it has both ancient and contemporary parallels in Europe and elsewhere. Ling's efforts to articulate her 'Multiple Worlds' without falling back on dichotomisations of 'the West' and 'China' (or 'the Rest') helps us further underscore that the 'Chinese view' that Qin describes need not be exoticized as a geo-culturally specific example. On the contrary, it might be contemporary IR theories which have marginalised

friendship that should be considered a highly specific exception to the more general global and historical trend.

Furthermore, the move away from a focus on individuality in Qin's *yin-yang* processual constructivism and Ling's Daoist dialectic decentres the prior focus on anxiety. I am not suggesting that Berenskötter, Shih and others are wrong in observing existing anxiety. I am, however, suggesting that this emotion is as constructed as the relations that are said to provoke and sooth it. In Qin's *guanxi* relations, affect and emotion have an important role, but do so in terms of 'collective emotion', rather than in terms of the anxiety that resides within the self (Qin, 2009:12). On a similar note, Ling's Daoist dialectic of multiple worlds is offered as 'a vision, an understanding, a state of being to treat and put into remission this "postcolonial anxiety"' (Ling, 2014:31-32). We may all be in a process of becoming, but there would be no reason to be anxious about this if we never attached ourselves to being in the first place. To Berenskötter, to reach harmony means to 'tame anxiety', and so friends matter because they can help us provide some sense of ontological security (Berenskötter, 2007:666). Shih sees a similar role for friendships or 'non-competitive relationships' drawing on Chinese tradition (Shih, 2016). On my reading here of the *yin-yang* dialectic, harmony is not the opposite of anxiety. Granted, harmony depends on our ability to manage relationships in a way that mediates disagreement, but this process as described by Qin and Ling is very different from that of taming the anxious self. This process provides resources for imagining the agency that embraces ontological insecurity and the incomplete nature of being to which Berenskötter gestures in his recent writing on anxiety. It is a process that we might also call friendship.

Conclusion

In this article, I have called for the development of a postcolonial friendship studies. This article has not sought to dismiss existing work on friendship, but to suggest a way to realise the potential of that work to create more global scholarship examining and advocating friendship. As I have argued, the main problem with existing scholarship is not that the global South and friendships therein are ignored. The key problem is that one particular set of European ideas and experiences of friendship provides the basis for putatively universal concepts and definitions with which we study friendship in both North and South. Thus, the project is not simply one of creating more diversity, it is an active process of engagement and change in the ways that we think and the things that we privilege.

Whilst I have used work in IR to illustrate my argument, I hope that scholars in other disciplines can use the arguments here to think critically about work on friendship in their own disciplines. In IR, work on friendship has been important in bringing a marginalised concept, ideal, and phenomenon back into sight. Furthermore, it has been valuable in challenging the hegemonic focus on enmity in the discipline. However, this

work in IR still has the potential to do more, and is illustrative of what friendship studies more broadly could be doing and could achieve.

If we want a different kind of world, we need new points of departure for thinking about political relations both globally and locally. Friendship can provide such a point of departure. As such, I have argued that dominant imaginings in modern IR understand friendship through assumptions deriving from specific European thought and experiences, which stipulate that: (1) friendship is the less important, residual, and feminised other of enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and (3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. I have drawn on Chinese thought to argue that we can rethink friendship by building instead on the premise that: (1) friendship is a central category for theorising global political relations, and should not be primarily understood in binary relation to enmity; (2) friends need to be significantly Other to the Self; and (3) we can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible, and fluid sense of Self. Needless to say, these are not the only possible points of departure for a postcolonial friendship studies. They are not the answer to the question of what decolonising friendship might mean for the discipline (necessarily, there is not a single answer, but many answers), but they demonstrate the kinds of new thinking that is made possible by simply raising the question. As such, they can form a point of departure for developing an interdisciplinary research agenda centred on the entwinement of the histories, anthropologies and philosophies of friendship with those of North-South relations. Once we start looking in earnest, we see that empire and its forms of friendship are a constitutive presence in the modern world. When we see this, the fundamental objects of inquiry in the study of friendship and in global political relations begin to shift.

The alternative that has been explored here suggests an understanding of friendship between radically incomplete and unknowable selves and others. Such an understanding of friendship has considerable scope to provide the basis for cross-fertilisation and alliances across imagined cultural and theoretical divides, and amongst those who would re-calibrate thinking and doing of global political relations away from its overemphasis on enmity, Western militarism, or Ling's warring and colonizing 'Westphalia world'. A plethora of epistemologies, lived experiences, and practices around the world share this type of point of departure, and can benefit from the language and insights provided by one another, by Daoist thought, and by friendship. Most immediately, postcolonial theory and decolonial scholarship share many of the commitments here (Chakrabarty, 2000; Bhambra, 2014; Barkawi, 2016; Rojas, 2016). Similarly, queer theory and varieties of feminism have long worked to denaturalise apparently stable identities and the violence involved in imposing them, with an emphasis on intersectionality (Weber, 2016; Haraway, 1991; Halberstam, 2011; Butler, 2005). Such scholarship has countered literatures that emphasise ontological security, and suggested that actors on the ground, such as anti-war activists, embody 'ontological failure' in a form of prefigurative politics (although such attempts also fail, Rossdale, 2015: 382). Where these literatures tend to celebrate a certain dissonance and discomfort found in such incompleteness or 'failure', a Daoist viewpoint provides an emotional or aesthetic position

that never conceives of it as failure in the first place, but emphasises harmony and ease. Both viewpoints can be appropriate sources for political and ethical engagement, that can complement one another and that do not exhaust the range of possible appropriate stances. Thus, the move of decolonisation proposed here disrupts colonial hegemony, but it does not seek to replace it with a new master epistemology. Instead, it attempts to abide in a world where there are multiple epistemologies and ontologies which are sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory. In terms of friendship itself, the decolonial move can resist the dominance of any one model or way of thinking about friendship.

Bringing such approaches to bear on friendship can contribute to a rethinking of disciplines like IR and their points of departure, worlding them, queering them, and decolonising them through an engagement with friendship. What if the study of global political relations paid serious attention to friendships within and between North and South? What if the study of friendship asked more serious questions about how colonial relations fed into its key assumptions, concepts, and canonical texts? What will we learn about friendship, about empire, and about the possibility for doing global political relations otherwise? These are questions that I have tried to open up in this article.

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