

# Further Reading and References

## Introduction: the ambiguity of friendship

Aristotle's examination of friendship is found in his *Nicomachean Ethics* chapters VIII and IX. A new translation, introduction and commentary by Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe published by Oxford University Press (2002) is clear and helpful. All my quotes from Aristotle come from this *Ethics* unless stated. He does discuss friendship elsewhere, notably in the *Eudemian Ethics* which is usually taken to be the main source for the *Nicomachean Ethics*. And also in the *Art of Rhetoric* 6.2.4.

The thought experiment of Nietzsche is from *Human, All Too Human* Volume I, 376.

## 1. Friends at work

The Aristotle references are from his *Nicomachean Ethics* chapters VIII and IX.

*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, by Adam Smith, is available from a number of publishers and can also be downloaded; Prometheus Books produce a cheap edition. An academic but readable article, 'Adam Smith on Friendship and Love', by Douglas J. Den Uyl and Charles L. Griswold Jr., can be found in the *Review of Metaphysic* 49 (March 1996): 609–37.

Smith is compared with Ferguson and Hume in Lisa Hill and Peter McCarthy's article 'Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society', in the excellent book *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, edited by Preston King and Heather Devere and published by Frank Cass (2000).

Friendship at work as an area of research has established quite a niche for itself in many business schools. Geraldine Perreault of the University of Northern Iowa, for example, has written on leadership as friendship.

## 2. Friends and lovers

Montaigne's essay 'On Friendship' where he discusses his relationship with La Boétie can be found in any collection of his *Complete Essays*, though Penguin's Great Ideas series includes an attractive publication of it alone, if without introduction.

John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin's friendship is examined in wonderful detail by Frances Harris in *Transformations of Love*, published by Oxford University Press (2002).

Simon Callow's *Love Is Where It Falls: an Account of a Passionate Friendship* is a highly readable, witty and moving book published by Penguin (1999).

C. S. Lewis's essay on friendship in *The Four Loves* (reissued in HarperCollins Signature Classics edition, 2002) is idiosyncratic and insightful in equal measure.

The quotes from Nietzsche are from *The Gay Science* Book 1, 14.

The classic on Greek homosexuality is Kenneth Dover's eponymous book (Duckworth, 1997), though James Davidson's forthcoming *The Greeks and Greek Love* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006) is set to revise that view.

There are many discussions of Plato's ideas about love; any introduction to Plato will include one. The translations of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, are engaging with accessible introductions. Martha Nussbaum is an oft-quoted source too: *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) contains many illuminating discussions.

When it comes to Plato on friendship in particular (and his dialogue the *Lysis*) there are fewer choices. The first chapter of Lorraine Smith Pangle's *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) is an academic examination of the *Lysis*, as is Anthony Price's rich and challenging first chapter in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Clarendon Press, 1990). My appendix here offers a more accessible outline, though one that may be contested by some. For another alternative translation and commentary on the dialogue David Bolotin captures the drama as well as the philosophy – *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship* (Cornell University Press, 1979).

For general philosophical comparisons of love and friendship I enjoyed Allan Bloom's *Love and Friendship* (Simon & Schuster, 1993) and the chapter on love in Andre Comte-Sponville's *A Short Treatise on the Great Virtues* (Vintage, 2003), though I am not sure he gets friendship quite right. Alain de Botton's *Essays in Love* (Picador, 1994) is an excellent novelised portrayal of love that touches on friendship too.

### 3. Faking it

The quotes from Nietzsche in this chapter come from three books, unless otherwise stated. A more or less complete list of his aphorisms on friendship in this middle period is:

*Human, All Too Human* Volume I, 354, 368, 376, 378, 390, 406, 499; Volume II, 241, 242, 251, 259, 260.

*The Gay Science* Book 1, 14, 16; Book 2, 61; Book 4, 279, 328; Book 5, 364, 366; and from the Prelude, Rhymes 14 and 25.

*Daybreak* Book 4, 287, 313; Book 5, 489.

Ruth Abbey puts them into academic context in her article 'Circles, Ladders and Stars: Nietzsche on Friendship', in *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, edited by Preston King and Heather Devere, published by Frank Cass (2000).

Proust's attitude to friendship is examined in Duncan Large's 'Proust on Nietzsche: the Question of Friendship', *Modern Language Review*, 88/3 (July 1993): 612–24.

For more on Stanley Cavell's thoughts his *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: the Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (University of Chicago Press, 1991) is a good place to start.

### 4. Unconditional love

Maria Boulding's translation of Augustine's *Confessions* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1997) captures the remarkably modern feel of the autobiography. Peter Brown's

classic biography of the saint is called *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography* (Faber and Faber, 1967).

The relevant sections from Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* are usefully collated in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, edited by Michael Pakaluk and published by Hackett (1991).

As indeed are the key paragraphs from Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*. For an examination of his philosophy and theology, Brian Davies's *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Clarendon, 1993) is hard to beat.

The Kant lecture is in Pakaluk's book too with an introduction.

Alasdair MacIntyre's reflections come from *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

To follow up on Iris Murdoch's idea of the good, see *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge, 1970).

Few contemporary Christian writers have sought to reconcile friendship and theology at book length which is itself notable given the ink spilt on divine love. P. Waddell's *Friendship and the Moral Life* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) and G. Meilaender's *Friendship: a Study in Theological Ethics* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) are two that are often cited. For a latter-day Kierkegaard, see Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros. Friendship and the Ways to Truth*, by David Burrell (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), weaves philosophy and faith together. Elizabeth Stuart's *Just Good Friends* (Mowbray, 1995) approaches the issue from a lesbian and gay perspective. Stanley Hauerwas has an article 'Companions on the Way: the Necessity of Friendship', in *The Ashbury Theological Journal* Vol. 45 (1990): 1. My Postscript to Jeremy Carrette's book *Religion and Culture by Michel Foucault* (Routledge, 1999), 'I Am Not What Am', offers a view of friendship through theological eyes.

## 5. Civic friendship

David Konstan's *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) discusses everything you could want to know about the matter and more. G. Herman in *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) is anthropological. Paul Cartledge's *The Greeks: a Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford University Press, 1993) paints the broader picture.

The Aristotle references are from his *Nicomachean Ethics* Chapter VIII and his civic friendship is discussed by Richard Mulgan in his article 'The Role of Friendship in Aristotle's Political Theory', in *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, edited by Preston King and Heather Devere. David Cohen in *Law, Sexuality and Society: the Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) is fascinating on the place of the household in political friendships.

The longest discussion of friendship in Plato's *Republic* occurs in Book 1 [334b ff], though not directly in relation to the ideal city-state. In the *Laws*, friendship is raised in a variety of contexts, for example, at [693c], [729d], [738d–e], [743c] and [757a].

The surviving texts of Epicurus are available in a number of readers. Suzanne Stern-Gillet brings Epicurean friendship to life, given the limited sources, in an article 'Epicurus and Friendship', in the journal *Dialogue*, 28 (1989): 275–88.

Cicero's dialogue on friendship, *Laelius*, can be found in the Penguin Classics volume *On the Good Life* (translated by Michael Grant, 1971).

Alan Bray's *The Friend* is published by University of Chicago Press (2003). Diarmuid MacCulloch's *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (Penguin, 2004) discusses changing attitudes to love, family and marriage. John Bossy's *Christianity in the West 1400–1700* (Oxford University Press, 1985) captures the essence and function of the medieval notion of charity. John Boswell's *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (Vintage, 1995) offers an alternative, and to my mind slightly less convincing, account of sworn friendship.

Frances Bacon's essay 'Of Friendship' addresses the particular issue of friendship with kings. (It can be found in any collection of his essays. Everyman publish a cheap edition.) His point is that those who are otherwise above reproach because of the power they wield need friends in order to keep their feet on the ground. Friendship, as Bacon puts it, 'opens the understanding', 'waxeth wiser', and 'there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty of a friend'. However, this friend cum special advisor on personal integrity can only speak the truth to power because he has minimal political interests of his own. If political concerns influence the friend, his advice loses its personal edge and his intimacy becomes sycophancy; friendship matters to Bacon because it is above affairs of state.

John Locke's *Essay concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government* is available online for free.

There is an interesting discussion of Anselm on friendship in an article entitled 'Friendship', by David Moss, in *Radical Orthodoxy*, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (Routledge, 1998).

Alfred's *Spiritual Friendship* is available from Cistercian Publications. Exerpts can be found in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, edited by Michael Pakaluk.

*I Know My Own Heart: the Diaries of Anne Lister, 1791–1840* is published by Virago (1988). Bray discusses the relationship at length.

## 6. Politics of friendship

Michael Farrell's *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* is published by University of Chicago Press (2003). My quotes come from his book. *Not For Ourselves Alone*, a film of Stanton and Anthony's life from PBS, is available on DVD from Warner Home Video.

Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* is published by HarperCollins (1998). The quote of Simone de Beauvoir comes from *The Second Sex* (Vintage Classics, 1997).

Marilyn Friedman's essay 'Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community' can be found in a mixed collection of essays, *Friendship: a Philosophical Reader*, edited by Neera Kapur Badhwar (Cornell University Press, 1993).

Mary E. Hunt discusses her politics of friendship in *Fierce Tenderness: a Feminist Theology of Friendship* (Crossroad, 1991).

My discussion of molly houses draws historical material from David Greenberg's *The Construction of Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1988). Michael Vasey's interpretation of their significance is in *Strangers and Friends* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1995).

For more on Mark Simpson see [www.marksimpson.com](http://www.marksimpson.com).

*Love Undetectable: Reflections on Friendship, Sex and Survival*, by Andrew Sullivan, is where his discussion of gay friendship can be found (Vintage, 1999).

Foucault's work on friendship can be hard to find, especially since it has become fashionable to attribute extreme constructionist accounts of sexuality to him. However, the thoughtful interview 'Friendship as a Way of Life' is in *Foucault Live*, edited by S. Lotringer (Semiotext(e), 1989). Jeremy Carrette's *Religion and Culture by Michel Foucault* (Routledge, 1999) also contains useful material.

Jeffrey Weeks's research is published in *Same-Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments* (Routledge, 2001). Anthony Giddens's ideas are found in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (Stanford University Press, 1993).

Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl's latest research is due out as *Hidden Solidarities: Friendship and Personal Communities Today* in 2005 from Princeton University Press. Pahl's *On Friendship* (Polity Press, 2000) is an accessible essay on friendship with a sociological slant.

For a less empirical take, try *Bowling Alone*, by Robert Putnam (Simon and Schuster, 2000).

## 7. The spirituality of friendship

The quote of Richard Wollheim comes from Chapter IX of *The Thread of Life* (Yale University Press, 1999).

Montaigne's essay 'On Friendship' can be found in any collection of his *Complete Essays*, and Penguin's Great Ideas series includes an edition of it alone.

Emerson's essay 'Friendship' comes from his First Series and is in *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Modern Library, 2000), edited by Brooks Atkinson and with an introduction by Mary Oliver, whom I quote too. *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings*, edited by Bell Gale Chevigny (Northeastern University Press, 1994), provides much more about Fuller.

## Conclusion: philosophy and friendship

Plutarch says this of Socrates in 'Whether a Man should Engage in Politics When He is Old', 26, 796d.

For more on the Socratic way of life though not so much on friendship, Pierre Hadot's *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Belknap Press, 2004) is a great read.

# Appendix: Plato and Aristotle on Friendship

For most philosophies of friendship, Aristotle provides the touchstone. His account of friendship, it is commonplace to argue, is the most penetrating analysis of friendship in ancient philosophy.

He begins with a definition of friendship; here is the succinct version found in the *Eudemian Ethics* (of which the *Nicomachean Ethics* is usually taken to be a reworking) – ‘A man becomes a friend whenever being loved he loves in return’ [EE 1236a14]. He divides friendship into three types. The first are utility-based friendships, like those of the workplace, where the friendship rests on a mutual benefit. The second are pleasure-based friendships, like those between young lovers, where the friendship rests on a shared pleasure. The third are friendships of excellence, meaning that the relationship stems from the excellent qualities that the friends embody in themselves. In terms of my discussion, these are like the friends who know each other well, can be honest and truthful to one another, and therefore exhibit other virtues such as those listed by Aristotle, including courage, great-spiritedness and generosity. Thus Aristotle sums up in the *Eudemian Ethics*: ‘If there is to be friendship, the parties must have goodwill towards each other, i.e. wish good things for each other, and be aware of the other’s doing so, the feeling being brought about by one of the three things mentioned [the beneficial, pleasant or good]’ [EE 1156a4].

This provides a framework from within which Aristotle can examine many aspects of friendship, material that I have drawn on extensively. It allows him to write evocative, even sublime aphorisms on what, after all, should be a beautiful subject: ‘No one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other goods’ [NE 1155a2]; ‘For though the wish for friendship arises quickly, friendship does not’ [NE 1156b32]; ‘A friend is another self’ [NE 1170b7].

However, this approach has its limits, of which Aristotle was undoubtedly aware. We noted one at the outset; that for the very best of friendships, the suggestion that they are based on goodwill seems rather to miss the point (like saying a painting is just oil on canvas, or a book just words on the page).

But, there are more profound philosophical problems with his account. In Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the final book, Aristotle comes to what he thinks is the best life of all. It is the contemplative life, a life spent in as full a state of consciousness as possible of those things that are thought truest. There are a number of reasons why Aristotle comes to this conclusion. First, those things that are truest must be the most excellent of all, and so make for the greatest happiness. Second, those things that are truest must be the most dependable things of all and so be reliable, again making for happiness. And third, contemplating those things can be done without having to depend on others: this means that such a person’s happiness does not depend on others and so is free of the unhappiness that others are bound to precipitate from time to time.

But this begs a question that is problematic for friendship: if someone does not need others to be happy then why would they need friends at all, or at least would not the friendship they offered others be somewhat half-hearted?

Aristotle is aware of the problem and in the course of the chapters on friendship he offers several suggestions. For example, it may be that for most human beings the contemplative state can only be achieved some of the time. Much of the time, therefore, people will need friends to be happy. Alternatively, it could be that human beings need others to learn how to perceive those things that are the truest, especially when it comes to freeing themselves from self-delusion. To that extent they will need friends.

Another possible way out for him arises from an ambiguity in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a whole. For whilst he suggests in Book X that the contemplative life is the happiest, in the earlier part of the *Ethics* he suggests that a life lived actively with others can be as happy since it makes for its own kinds of practical excellences [NE 1095b18 ff]. This is undoubtedly true. Take friendship. I have argued that it is itself a school of love and virtue. However, Aristotle is very keen on those contemplative insights in Book X; they are divine, he says. So, again, a certain ambiguity remains as to quite how important friendship can actually be for the happiest of lives.

In other words, the supposed solution to his problem actually makes the situation worse. His approach rests upon a definition of friendship, and from that points to the quintessential kind – shared between those living the best life possible. However, if this quintessential case is itself compromised, because the greatest happiness is achieved by self-sufficient individuals, then it seems that his whole theory of friendship is under threat.

Aristotle's is not the only considered account of friendship in antiquity. Plato provides another, in the shape of his dialogue, the *Lysis*. The *Lysis* is often overlooked by philosophers for a number of reasons. First, it is not so much an account of friendship as a portrayal of friendship, and as such may be less appealing to the contemporary analytical frame of mind. Second, in the same way that it is a portrayal not an account, it is also a philosophical drama and not a philosophical treatise. In other words, the actions of the characters and the cultural and social inferences within the dialogue may count as much for its meaning as anything the participants actually say. This, again, means that it can be taken to be less definitive. Indeed, as we have seen, it ends aporetically – that is, Socrates says to his interlocutors that although they intuitively think they know what friendship is, what it actually is they have not been able to say. Philosophers, including Aristotle, have therefore tended to conclude that the *Lysis* contains a few useful comments in terms of identifying certain problems associated with love and friendship, but that ultimately it is flawed. For Plato's best account of love one must turn to his philosophical masterpiece, the *Symposium*.

But I think that if the *Lysis* can be accused of anything it is only of hiding its light under a bushel. And what is more, given a certain reading of it, it can be seen to be at its most successful precisely at the points where Aristotle stumbles. Here's what happens.

The dialogue opens with Socrates one day walking through Athens. He comes across two young men, Hippothales and Ctesippus, who are hanging around outside a gymnasium, partly to talk and partly to observe the youths coming

and going. Socrates teases them about which activity they prefer and it turns out that one of them, Hippothales, is infatuated with one of the students inside, the beautiful Lysis. This is actually completely obvious, although when Socrates spots it, it does give him the opportunity ironically to add that although he is ignorant about all things – his wisdom stemming from knowing that he knows nothing – there is one area in which he does have some insight, and that is in matters of love. So, Hippothales asks Socrates how to woo Lysis.

Socrates begins by exploring the nature of Hippothales' infatuation. Ctesippus says that its most painful feature is that it causes Hippothales to sing insufferable songs, comparing Lysis to a summer's day (not that, of course: the ancient Mediterranean motif appears to have been comparison with a fine horseman). Socrates is saved having to listen to these odes, but he agrees they are embarrassing (for the same reason that infatuation is demeaning). First, they show that Hippothales knows nothing special about Lysis: everyone knows the line about the fine horsemen. Secondly, they show he knows nothing about himself: he is singing as if he has already won Lysis' love, something that will not only be painful if he fails to do so, and also something that is a strategic mistake since, like a hunter who sings in the forest, he is likely to scare his prey away before he gets near him. In short, infatuation is not true love, it is blind love. There are wise words here for those prone to the infatuated state. Having made his point, Socrates then agrees to show Hippothales how it should be done. They go into the gymnasium and find Lysis.

This marks the end of the introductory section of the dialogue [203a–206e], for we now meet the youth himself. When he appears, he does not disappoint. But Socrates then does a surprising thing. Rather than wooing Lysis, he starts to talk to Lysis' friend Menexenus, who has also joined them. Moreover, Socrates asks Menexenus about his friendship with Lysis, something that continues when Menexenus turns to Lysis and brings him into the conversation. In other words, Socrates is saying to Hippothales, if you want to love him, don't fawn all over him, but befriend him. The dialogue has switched to its main subject, friendship.

Before continuing with what happens next, it is worth asking why Plato devised an apparently roundabout route to approach his subject. The answer is that Socrates does not know what friendship is in itself. For all that he might have an idea, perhaps drawing on the experience of having friends, his wisdom tells him that it is likely to be wrong. If, therefore, he had begun by proposing a definition, for example, there would be no guarantee that it was not a misleading false start.

However, he needs to begin somehow: there clearly are things to be said about friendship. So, he begins with the one thing he does know about, namely, love. Socrates knows about love because he takes love, at base, to be the desire for something that someone lacks. For example, someone who is in love wants their beloved and, even when they are together, they want them forever (that is, not lacking them at some point in the future). Similarly, Socrates knows about love because he is a philosopher of the sort who longs for the truth, perceiving that he lacks it. Thus, knowing about love is paradoxically consistent with knowing too that one is ignorant.

What the initial encounter with Hippothales shows is that being infatuated is doubly ignorant: the person who is infatuated neither really knows the person

they love nor perceives that they do not. Socrates can show that much to Hippothales with confidence; he wants to inculcate in him a wiser love.

Now, Socrates suspects that this wiser love might be something to do with friendship. He has, after all, spent his life wandering around Athens, and the people with whom he has had the most philosophically illuminating conversations have often become friends. But he does not know what friendship is in itself. So, Plato contrives for Socrates now to meet not only Lysis but also Lysis' friend, Menexenus. They are youths and full of youthful friendship, we might say of the sort that are made between first-year undergraduates, based upon the foolish assumption that all things are possible, all things are pleasurable and nothing can possibly separate the friends. In other words, it is an obvious candidate for friendship but one that has the virtue, as far as the Socratic way of doing philosophy is concerned, of being equally obviously flawed (like the best scientific theories, its value lies in being readily falsified). It therefore provides a good place to start an examination of friendship. We might note that this is very much like the 'from-below-up' idea of friendship that lies at the heart of the Emersonian spirituality of friendship.

Sure enough, Socrates looks at the friends in front of him – Lysis and Menexenus – and asks them about their particular friendship [207b ff]. He teases them about it, playing on its competitive character; he asks them who is the more beautiful, wealthy and wise. They try to laugh this off (shallow friendship has few resources for facing such questions) and immediately start to feel uneasy about their relationship. The brilliance of this move philosophically speaking is that Plato has therefore already taken a step forward – Socrates is more interested in a deeper kind of friendship than the one displayed in front of him – but without making any presuppositions.

The opportunity to take another step comes next because Menexenus is called off to do something else in the gymnasium, leaving Lysis free to talk to Socrates on his own [207d–210e]. The 'from-below-up' approach comes into its own now: Socrates does not ask Lysis about friendship *per se* but starts to converse with him with the aim of befriending him. (Moreover, a philosophical discussion about friendship would be a dry thing if it was not at least open to the possibility of friendship forming between the interlocutors.) Though, Socrates' technique for befriending Lysis seems at first to be more likely to provoke antagonism not amity. For example, he forces Lysis to admit that although he comes from a rich and privileged family, he is barely free to do or think anything of his own volition because his parents and guardians watch over him in nearly every respect. This is strong stuff for a young Athenian male whose education was nothing if not a preparation for the life of politics and pleasure. However, Lysis is a humble chap. He can take Socrates disabusing him of his self-delusion. And, in fact, implicitly thanks Socrates for doing so. Needless to say, Socrates warms to this response very much, and so although he set out challenging Lysis, the beginnings of a deeper friendship are the result. Had he merely chatted to him, their relationship would have remained friendly but ephemeral.

Menexenus then returns [211a]. This is the point at which Socrates makes his dramatic confession [211d]. He declares that he knows nothing about friendship, though he would rather have a friend than all the gold of the king of Persia, Darius: 'I don't even know the manner in which one becomes a friend of another', he says. 'When it comes to the acquisition of friends [I am] quite

passionately in love' – that is, he lacks friendship and longs for it. As we noted before, this is a very strong admission. It places his desire for a friend and for an understanding of friendship on a par with the passionate love that has defined his life, his desire for wisdom; not so surprising given that the relationship between Socratic philosophy and friendship is in many ways one of correspondence.

This confession is of course somewhat ironic, and for the same reason that Emerson advocated a paradoxical stance. Socrates does have friends but he does not enjoy a friendship of the highest sort.

It also serves to draw a contrast with the friendship between Menexenus and Lysis, the friendship of a rather boyish, immature sort: what Socrates wants is not mere friendship but friendship of the sort that can embrace human uncertainty and life's imperfections. Perhaps Lysis has already started to realise this given his conversation with Socrates and sees now that Socrates is calling his friendship with Menexenus into question by suggesting that something better should be possible.

What, then, might this be like? What is true friendship and who is a good friend? A good friend must be wise, in the way that Socrates is wise, and the conversation between Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus now explores what this means for friendship in some depth. Socrates says that he occupies what he calls an 'in-between' state [216c ff]. On the one hand, his wisdom is not god-like: he knows one thing, that he is ignorant. If he knew more, he would not be a philosopher – one who searches for wisdom. Moreover, he would have no reason to seek out deeper friendships because his philosophical quest would cease (like Aristotle's self-sufficient individual, the rest of his life would be one of contemplation). On the other hand, if he knew nothing and was blind to the fact, he would not be a philosopher either; he would be just an opinionated old man. In this case, his desire for friendship of any significant sort would be dramatically reduced too because he would not entertain, let alone seek out, individuals who challenged his ignorance. Socrates is in-between these states, being mostly uncertain about things and aware of his limits. It is this state of being, this negative capability, which makes for the best possibilities of friendship.

Socrates demonstrates what he means in another way, by asking Lysis and Menexenus who they think might make good friends [212b–216c]. They discuss various options. For example, do people who are alike befriend one another well, as in the saying 'like with like together strike'. This seems a strong possibility though they then realise that people who are wholly alike have little to offer one another because the other person will have it already. Since friends are a good thing to have in part because they can be useful to each other (whilst not being *merely* useful to each other), then it is hard to see how individuals who are too alike can make for the deepest kind of friendship. Indeed, it is often said that animosity springs up between people when they are too alike.

So maybe, they wonder, the best kinds of friendship form between individuals who are unlike – as the dry desert welcomes rain, or the cold day sunshine. This seems possible, as in the saying 'opposites attract'. But the individuals must not be so unlike each other that they have nothing in common. And if in the logical extreme one was led to presume that friendship would form between those who are wholly unlike, then this would clearly be as ridiculous as saying that enemies were friends.

If these intellectual rambles might seem like the kind of thing that philosopher friends would enjoy together, but not others, then there is a deeper reason for running through them. Remember, Socrates is now talking with two individuals who have begun to question the veracity of their friendship. One relatively kind way of encouraging them to think about that is to explore the sorts of conditions that make for friendship in abstract. In asking whether friends are alike, *Lysis* and Menexenus are bound to wonder whether that is the basis, and perhaps the problem, with their friendship. Similarly, in asking about the relationship between people who are unlike. This approach also has benefits for the reader of the dialogue because they too are encouraged to compare the friendships they enjoy with what is being said. Plato hopes, I think, that his readers may learn something not only about friendship per se, but also more importantly about the dynamics of their own friendships.

In other words, it carries the advantages of a below-up ethos of friendship. By toying with possibilities for friendship – between like, unlike and so on – one is learning to be open to the ways in which various scenarios in real life might contain the seeds of deeper friendship. The general point is that life causes many people to cross our path. When it comes to seeking friendship, the best way is not to try to impose some predetermined idea of friendship on the people we meet: like saying happiness is such and such, that way only brings disappointment. Rather, it is to assess the various encounters that life brings, with all their ambiguities, uncertainties and possibilities, and ask, who are my good friends and why – what can I nurture about them? This is, again, good advice in a sentimental age with a tendency to avoid the real in preference for idealised relationships and individuals. It is exactly the opposite approach to the self-help book that advises drawing up lists of 3 ‘must-haves’, 3 ‘nice-to-haves’, and 3 ‘avoid at all costs’ and then advises seeking this ‘perfect’ person out.

There is more to this Socratic friendship for other reasons too. For example, it emphasises the fact that there is always more to discover, and enjoy, in the friendship. This is another positive aspect to the scarcity of the very best kind. What Plato implies in the *Lysis* is that friendship is a way of life, in the sense of being a constant process of becoming with others. Sparked by desire, like other loves, it is distinguished by a dynamic that results in an increasing self-awareness coupled to knowing the other better. Friends want to know each other and be known. Like the lovers who become friends too, because they turn from gazing into each other’s eyes to appreciate the world around them, the best friendships are not confined to a mutual introspection; they are fed by a common striving after those goals, hopes and excellent things which lie beyond and around them. (In the *Lysis*, this aspect comes through when they discuss what drives friendship, calling it the ‘first love’ or *proton philon* [219c].)

Further, it is to acknowledge the mystery of loving another deeply – a mystery because ultimately there are always parts of them that are unknown. This may be a hard thing to accept if friendship is sought solely for security. But the great thing about acknowledging it is that the limit it apparently imposes paradoxically turns out to make for the very best friendships. Think of it another way: although best friends say they know each other, they do not say there is nothing more to discover about you or learn from you. Apart from the insult, that would suggest that they are bored of the friendship; once admitted, the

friendship would unravel. Rather, the motor of friendship is the delight of always finding more in the friend and in friendship. Friendship is, then, a way of life that is always deepening and broadening itself.

It is for this reason that the *Lysis* ends with the aporia [223a ff]. Trivially, it makes the point that the friendship between Socrates and Lysis can only get so far in one encounter, and perhaps even additional meetings are likely to be limited because Lysis is young (Plato has Socrates speculating 'off-camera' that he might have to seek older individuals out to pursue friendship further). But more substantially, it shows that any good friendship will be open ended, as the dialogue is.

So, the *Lysis* offers a portrayal of friendship as a way of life in which, at its best, Socratic philosophy and becoming friends are one and the same thing. What is more, it does not face the problems Aristotle does. In Socrates' scheme of things, there is no such thing as the self-sufficient person who can happily contemplate truth free of doubt. Further, any attempt to conclusively define friendship fails too: else it would share the same risk that actual friends do if they congratulate themselves on the fullness, depth and perfection of their friendship: they would have settled for less than the fullness of life which is an ongoing process of becoming – 'I could do the best good for each of you, by persuading you to be less concerned with what you have than with what you are, so that you may make yourself excellent in wisdom and truth and the perfection of your soul' [*Apology* 29e].

# Index

- Aelred of Rievaulx, 95, 115–17  
Allan, Graham, 132  
altruism, 83–9  
Anselm, 95, 114–15  
Aquinas, Thomas, 83–92, 95, 116,  
126, 161  
Aristotle, 2–3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 16–17,  
19–21, 23, 41–3, 44, 60, 69–70,  
73, 75–6, 84–5, 88, 90, 95, 98,  
99, 106, 116, 144, 147, 164,  
170–6  
*Art*, 131  
Augustine, 72–7, 88, 89, 117  
  
Bailey, John, 43  
Beckham, David, 130  
Berlin, Isaiah, 57  
Bossy, John, 110  
Bray, Alan, 107–14  
*Bridget Jones' Diary*, 32  
Brown, Peter, 75  
  
Callow, Simon, 30, 46–9  
Carrette, Jeremy, 145  
Cavell, Stanley, 65  
celibacy, 47–8  
Cicero, 95, 103–6, 115, 117  
civic friendship, 9, 93–118, 141–4  
civil partnerships, 141–2, 143–4  
coffee houses, 128–9  
commercialism, 22–8  
communitarianism, 126–7  
Coupland, Douglas, 27–8  
Cruise, Tom, 131  
  
Dante Alighieri, 149  
Dickinson, Emily, 151  
dinner parties, 156  
Diotima, 37, 41  
  
egoism, 83–9  
Emerson, Ralph, 59, 150–9, 164, 173,  
174  
  
Epicurus, 95, 101, 162  
Evelyn, John, 30, 109, 111  
  
Faderman, Lilian, 124–5  
Ferguson, Adam, 26–7  
Forster, E. M., 33  
Foucault, Michel, 133–7, 139  
Friedman, Marilyn, 127  
friendship  
    and alcohol, 99–100  
    and Christianity, 72–92, 94, 108–9,  
    113, 114–17, 161  
    and cities, 127  
    and death, 73–5, 105, 117, 149  
    and democracy, 82, 98–9, 107, 144  
    and dissimulation, 8, 55–9, 80,  
    93–4, 132, 149, 153–4, 161,  
    162, 164  
    and enemies, 14, 18, 69, 73, 80, 95,  
    98, 101, 144  
    and feminism, 120–8  
    and gossip, 13, 17, 57  
    and happiness, 1, 6, 19, 23, 24, 33,  
    42, 59, 62, 72–3, 79–81, 83, 89,  
    91, 99, 102, 123, 157, 159, 162,  
    170–1  
    and honesty, *see* friendship, and  
    dissimulation  
    and individualism, 88–91, 125–8  
    and making demands, 80  
    and marriage, 3–4, 5, 31, 49, 61, 82,  
    83, 106, 135, 139, 140, 141  
    and rights, 82–3, 91  
    and romantic love, 49, 139, 140, 146  
    and selfishness, 15–16, 76, 77,  
    79–80, 82, 85, 88–9, 91  
    and sex, 7, 31–49, 77, 93, 134, 160,  
    170  
    and social cooperation, 22–4, 26  
    and suffering, 63–4, 158–9  
    and work, 7, 11–28, 67–8, 89, 93,  
    128, 160, 170: working for a  
    friend, 21–2

- friendship – *continued*  
 as with another self, 59–63, 65–6,  
 67, 77, 80, 116, 146, 149, 150  
 ending, 52, 68–71  
 freedom in, 4, 127, 135–6, 138, 139  
 God and, 74–6, 89, 90, 91, 116,  
 155, 161  
 Greek for, 97  
 male friendship, 130–3, 135:  
*see also* friendship, same-sex  
 friendship  
 men’s and women’s, differences  
 between, 9, 41  
 of Anne Lister and Ann Walker,  
 114, 117–18, 119–20, 125  
 of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and  
 Susan B. Anthony, 121–4  
 of Harmodius and Aristogiton,  
 96–7, 100  
 online, 14, 57, 145, 156  
 same-sex friendship, 32–3, 134–5,  
 136: *see also* friendship, male  
 friendship  
 soul friendship, 145–59  
 with books, 64–6  
 with celebrities, 54, 56, 86  
 with difficult people, 61–2  
 with strangers, 152–3  
 Fuller, Margaret, 151–2, 154, 155
- Giddens, Anthony, 139–40, 141  
*Gods and Monsters*, 60–1  
 Godolphin, Margaret, 30  
 Goldhill, Simon, 143  
 google grief, 5–6
- Hawthorne Effect, 18  
 homosexuality, 36–7, 38, 60, 109,  
 124, 128–39  
 in the church, 135  
 in the military, 134–5  
 Hornby, Nick, 132  
 Hunt, Mary E., 127–8
- Ikea, 13
- Kant, Immanuel, 79–81, 82  
 Keats, John, 161  
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 77–8
- King, Richard, 145  
 Kirsch, Michele, 5–6
- Lewis, C. S., 32, 39–40  
 Locke, John, 111–12  
*Lost in Translation*, 48  
 loyalty, 26
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, 82, 126  
 Menander, 159  
 Mill, John Stuart, 32  
 molly houses, 129–30, 134  
 Montaigne, 30, 59, 147–50  
 Murdoch, Iris, 43, 90
- narcissism, 74, 76, 77, 87, 146  
 nepotism, 26, 82  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 5, 6, 40, 50–62,  
 63–4, 66–71, 95, 153
- Office, The*, 11–12
- Pahl, Ray, 140, 143  
 Plato, 6, 35–41, 75, 95, 101–2, 119,  
 162–4, 170–6  
 Platonic love, 36  
 Plutarch, 106, 162–3  
 Proust, Marcel, 65
- rational economic man, 125–6  
 reality TV, 14, 64  
*Referee, The*, 120–1  
 Rossetti, Christina, 64  
 Ruskin, John, 64
- Schmitt, Carl, 144  
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 51, 52  
 Seneca, 95, 105–6  
 Shakespeare, William, 55, 56, 69  
 Simpson, Mark, 131  
 Smith, Adam, 22–6  
 soaps, 1, 31–2, 131  
 Socrates, 6, 36, 38–9, 62–3, 98, 100,  
 161–4, 171–6  
 solitude, 66–8  
 soulmate, *see* friendship, soul  
 friendship  
 Spencer, Liz, 140  
 Stoicism, 104–6

- Stoppard, Tom, 160  
Sullivan, Andrew, 132–3  
sworn brothers, 112–18
- Taylor, James, 16  
Taylor, Jeremy, 113  
team-building, 14  
*Thelma and Louise*, 119–20  
Thomas Aquinas, 83–92, 95, 116, 126,  
161  
*Trainspotting*, 17
- utilitarianism, 81, 94, 161
- Vasey, Michael, 129–30  
Vidal, Gore, 56  
virtue ethics, 90
- Wagner, Richard, 50–2  
Watters, Ethan, 31  
Weeks, Jeffrey, 137–9  
Wollheim, Richard, 146