



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Friendship as a Political Concept: A Groundwork for Analysis*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/132180/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Smith, GM orcid.org/0000-0003-2521-0066 (2019) Friendship as a Political Concept: A Groundwork for Analysis. *Political Studies Review*, 17 (1). pp. 81-92. ISSN 1478-9299

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918786856>

© 2018, The Author(s). This is an author produced version of a paper published in *Political Studies Review*. Reprinted by permission of SAGE Publications.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Friendship as a Political Concept:

A Groundwork for Analysis

Abstract: What kind of a concept is friendship, and what is its connection to politics? Critics sometimes claim that friendship does not have a role to play in the study of politics. Such objections misconstrue the nature of the concept of friendship and its relation to politics. In response, this article proposes three approaches to understanding the concept of friendship: (1) as a ‘family resemblance’ concept; (2) as an instance of an ‘essentially contested’ concept; and (3) as a concept indicating a problématique. The article thus responds to the dismissal of friendship by undertaking the groundwork for understanding what kind of a concept friendship might be, and how it might serve different purposes. In so doing so it this opens the way for understanding friendship’s relation to politics.

Keywords: Friendship, scepticism, ‘family resemblance’, ‘essentially contested’, problématique.

Introduction

This article prepares the way for an understanding of friendship and its relation to politics. Friendship has taken an increasingly prominent place in the study of politics in recent years (Devere and King, 2000; King and Smith, 2007; Heyking and Avramenko, 2008; Devere and Smith, 2010; Devere, 2013; Koschut and Oelsner, 2014). Special attention has also been paid to the role of friendship in feminist theory (Friedman, 1993; Schwarzenbach, 2009) and ‘anticolonial’ literature (Gandhi, 2006; Nordin, 2017). In addition, much of this literature explores historical and theoretical precedents (Hutter, 1978; Rouner, 1994; Devere, 1999; Roshchin 2006; Heyking and Avramenko, 2008). Nevertheless, some circumspection persists. In the first part of this article (‘Critical views and their responses: scepticism and disanalogy’) these doubts are outlined and discussed. They can be summarised under two broad headings. First, the ‘sceptical’ view denies both the possibility and the desirability of any connection between friendship and politics. Second, the ‘dis-analogy’ view considers friendship and political relations (such a citizenship) to be disanalogous in important ways. Both views share a central assumption: they frame friendship as an essentially idiosyncratic, affective, and personal relationship. As a result, friendship is not

to be considered a component of politics, and it is undesirable to make it so. In response this article argues that these views rest on an unduly restrictive understanding of both friendship and politics, foreclosing discussion of these terms.

The second part of the article ('The concept of friendship: three approaches') identifies three approaches to the study of friendship in politics. The first is to consider friendship to be a 'family-resemblance' or cluster concept. This approach identifies different uses of the term friendship which are connected through sharing features. Thus, it is possible to conceive of varieties of friendship of which a form of political friendship is one. The second approach is to treat friendship as an 'essentially contested' concept. Treated in such a way the meaning of friendship is contested or in dispute. This approach attempts to identify a paradigm case which is evaluative of the meaning of friendship itself. Thus, accounts of friendship and politics which are generated by this approach attempt to produce a model of political friendship as a normative ideal. Finally, friendship can be approached as a *problématique*. As *problématique* the focus is not so much on what friendship is, but what role it plays in political analysis. From this perspective, friendship is a marker not just of the bonds between persons and groups, but also as a part of the fabric of political life itself. The article concludes by commenting on the relationship between the approaches. It argues that whilst each approach focuses on friendship the approaches are motivated by, and suited to, different purposes.

Critical views and their responses: scepticism and disanalogy

As has been suggested, despite the growing literature on friendship and politics some scepticism about the connection remains. In order to explore these doubts some representative articles offering systematic criticism of the connection between friendship and politics will be summarised, before moving on to highlight some of the responses.

Amongst those who deal directly with the question of the connection between friendship and politics Keller's article 'Against friendship between countries' is paradigmatic. Keller focuses on the question of whether states can be friends. Keller understands scholars such as Digeser (Digeser, 2009a, Digeser, 2009b) and Lu (Lu, 2009) to be basing their accounts of the connection between friendship and politics by drawing an analogy between persons and countries. Keller claims that this analogy is 'ontologically and ethically dubious' (Keller, 2009). In terms of the ontological problem, for Keller, countries cannot have friendships as friendship relates only to the

lives of individual human-beings (Keller, 2009: 61, 72). It is not possible to attribute emotions to a country, and a country does not have ‘the need to forge its own identity and to give it meaning and structure, and it does not find the thought of life without friends foreign and frightening’ (Keller, 2009: 60, 65). In terms of the ethical problems, for Keller moral claims between countries based on friendship are an ‘epiphenomenon’ (Keller, 2009: 70), and ultimately talk of considerations of friendship between countries can be reduced to ‘considerations of the rights and interests of real individuals’ (Keller, 2009: 67-68).

Keller’s reasons for dismissing the possibility of friendship between countries are echoed by critics who have been sceptical of attempts to use friendship to model relations within the state and to relate friendship to citizenship. Theorists who attempt this connection include Kaplan, who has pointed to friendship’s role in creating exclusivity and identity between members of the nation (Kaplan, 2007). In addition, Scorza has argued that Emerson’s conception of the communicative norms of friendship ‘could help to enrich the contemporary practice of citizenship’ and that ‘people who understand what it means to be a good friend also know something ... about what it means to be a good citizen’ (Scorza, 2004: 87, 103). Others have complemented citizenship with friendship (Farrands, 2001), or redeveloped citizenship along the lines of civic friendship (Schwarzenbach, 1996, Schwarzenbach, 2005, Schwarzenbach, 2009, Kahane, 1999). Wellman is illustrative of those who are critical of this approach (Wellman, 2001). Wellman recognises the appeal of conceiving of compatriots as friends, but his argument is to reject this attempt (Wellman, 2001: 217). Wellman contrasts compatriots/citizens to friends by claiming that ‘Citizenship is importantly unlike friendship insofar as the former is largely nonconsensual, lacking in emotional connection and interdependence, and of no apparent intrinsic value’ (Wellman, 2001: 223). In addition, Jeske claims that those who model political obligations on friendship tend to be selective in the aspects of friendship that they recognise (Jeske 2008: 49). These doubts overlap with concerns raised by Mary Healy (Healy, 2011). Healy rejects the claim that friendship can be a metaphor or model for the bond between citizens because it cannot be transposed from its Ancient Greek context – a context which is different from and objectionable for contemporary politics based on freedom and equality (Healy, 2011: 229-230). Again, the analogy is seen as defective as the affection of friendship cannot ‘be replicated on a large scale’, friendship is partial whereas (ideally) justice should be impartial, and friendship bonds are ‘susceptible to the same tensions as kinship and tribal allegiances’ (Healy, 2011: 237).

There are a number of responses which have been offered to critics focusing on both the ontological and ethical possibilities of friendship in politics. In terms of some of the ontological claims, scholars have questioned the

basic assumption that friendship is (and must be) a personal and affective relationship between individuals. There have been significant pieces of work which develop the possibility of states either being friends or displaying some form of friendship. For example, Berenskoetter (2007) argues that friendship helps states to form stable identities and to alleviate anxiety. Heimann (2012) has argued that friendship is a social role that enables states to recognise their obligations. Others such as Koschut and Oelsner respond to Keller directly pointing out that friendship is used metaphorically in IR ‘because it resembles interpersonal friendship, not because it can be straightforwardly applied to states’ (Koschut and Oelsner 2014: 7). Digeser also takes up Keller’s challenge noting that ‘[Keller] is mistaken in assuming that interpersonal friendship must be the only game in town’ and that ordinary usage of the notion that states can be friends ‘is pointing to the possibility of a kind of relationship that is different from friendship between individuals’ (Digeser 2009: 38).

Digeser thus points to the possibility of varieties of friendship. In this respect, Edyvane and Schwarzenbach are careful to distinguish personal and political friendship in a way which admits commonalities and structural similarities, but which does not collapse the two (Edyvane 2007: 152; Schwarzenbach 1996: 123). More broadly, in terms of historical and cultural sweep research identifies friendships which stand in contrast to the ‘personal’ friendship model (Rouner, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1997; Haseldine, 1999; Shannon, 2002; Roshchin 2016; 2017). It is simply not possible to assume that the view of friendship which is prevalent in contemporary Western cultures is either universal, trans-historical, or even unproblematic. Thus, Smith has argued that what might be termed the ‘contemporary-affective’ model of friendship should not be taken to stand for all forms of friendship. Smith points out that even this model of friendship is not as clear-cut or as unproblematic as might be thought as it raises a host of questions about the contours of friendship itself (Smith 2011: 1-15). This is not to say that some have not attempted to connect a more ordinary sense of friendship to politics (Pangle 2003 and King 2007 might be considered to be doing this). However, when this occurs the personal account tends to be understood not just in terms of the affections and a dyadic relation, but as a forum for the realisation of a more public good such as virtue or justice. In this sense this understanding of personal friendship adds something that the privatised and personal view of friendship often omits.

Just as the critics’ framing of the ontology of friendship has been challenged, so too has the claim that friendship has either limited or negative ethical consequences for politics. Work exists which engages with this aspect of friendship and suggests its possibilities. Edyvane has addressed the issues surrounding the supposed ‘partiality’ of friendship arguing that a commitment to friends can generate an commitment to impartiality (2007: 154-7).

Whilst King tends to focus on a more personal form of friendship (rather than a ‘civic friendship’), he is careful to underline its ethical potential. King recognises that it is unlikely that affection can extend too widely, but argues that friendship has a beneficial impact on society as a whole. Importantly, friendship works against the dangers of a homogeneous mass and preserves particularity (2007: 28). Friendship enables individuals to ‘relate in a civilised and disinterested way’ (2007: 28). Friedman has also shown how friendship has a supporting role in politics. Far from being ethically dubious because of its partiality, Friedman has shown how friendship enables its participants to see from standpoints other than their own. It also has a vital ethical role in supporting not only the existing culture of politics, but also the possibility of counter-culture. However, nowhere is the ethical significance of friendship more evident than in the work of Schwarzenbach (1996; 2009). Schwarzenbach develops a kind of civic friendship which is to be understood as a form of ‘ethical praxis’ and which is modelled on the otherwise excluded experience and labour of women. Schwarzenbach is clear that this form of friendship is not to replace democracy and liberal rights, but that it is the necessary ethical framework for the action necessary for these to be supported and fulfilled (Schwarzenbach 1996: 115-7; 2009: 242-245). In this way, Schwarzenbach has shown that civic friendship leads to a form of care between citizens, a form of care which is based on reason rather than the emotions. As Schwarzenbach writes ‘Friendship leads us to a moral common life – one based on shared ends and adopted through reasonable principles’ (Schwarzenbach 2009: 254). Such a conception of civic friendship illustrates friendship’s capacity to serve as a political concept, and it is a long way from the assumption that friendship is, and can only be, a private emotional relation based on preference. Such an assumption unduly forecloses the possibility of friendship in politics.

The concept of friendship: three approaches

In the previous section, certain received views of friendship and the political have been challenged. In respect to friendship this involves moving beyond a narrow and restricted understanding which essentialises it as a private, personal and affective relation which is definitionally devoid of any political connection. However, if the concept of friendship is something more than the specific conceptualisations of friendship, then how can this be understood (see Lalumera, 2013)?

To begin thinking in this direction it is useful to highlight one common set of problems by posing the questions ‘What is friendship?’ and ‘What is a friend?’. Historically, significant attention has been paid to the second of these questions; famously it leads to aporia in Plato’s *Lysis*. In contrast, recent thought has focused on the first

question. The difference between the two questions might appear sophistic. After all, can there be friendship without friends; can there be friends without friendship? In fact, the move is consequential in a number of ways. First, in moving from the qualities of the friend to the notion of friendship, scholars have been able to appreciate a wider and more diverse range of phenomena than focus on ‘the friend’ would allow. Significantly, this has reopened the role that friendship can play between and within states and nations (Roshchin, 2006; Berenskoetter, 2007; King and Smith, 2007; Devere et al., 2011; Oelsner and Vion, 2011; Roshchin, 2011; Koschut and Oelsner, 2014). Second, by focusing on friendship rather than the qualities of ‘the friend’ recent scholarship has been attentive to a politics where notions of the over-arching good have been called into question. Thus, friendship is a phenomenon which can be found in pre-modern, modern, and ‘post-modern’ politics (Derrida, 1997; Pahl, 2000; Vernon, 2005; Spencer and Pahl, 2006; Kaplan, 2007; Vernon, 2010; May, 2012). Third, by focusing on friendship rather than ‘the friend’ recent scholarship has been able to stress that the concept denotes a relationship. As such it indicates a set of interactions, expectations, and dynamics.

Despite this tendency to refocus from the question of the friend to that of friendship, it is fair to say that no consensus exists on what friendship is. Multiple and diverse conceptions of friendship exist, and the definitional question persists. This raises a problem common to a number of concepts: defined too tightly friendship is bound to vanish (no single candidate turns out to be an instance); defined too loosely the concept loses its coherence and utility (too much becomes friendship (see Smith 2011: 10-11)). Furthermore, questions can also be raised concerning what ‘friendship’ is naming: is it that there are many things which happen to share a name, or is it that some of the things which use the name have no business doing so? In order to bring some order to the diverse conceptualisations of friendship, and in order to respond to some of the questions that are raised about it as a concept, in what follows three approaches to understanding the concept of friendship are outlined. Friendship will be considered as: (1) a family-resemblance and cluster concept; (2) an essentially contested concept; and (3) as *problématique*. After these approaches have been outlined the article will conclude by discussing their compatibility. It will be argued that whilst all the three approaches focus on friendship they serve different purposes. The ‘family-resemblance’ approach attempts to identify different instances of friendship all of which are equally friendship; it is less concerned with the definition of friendship and is focused on how friendship is used. The ‘contested concept’ approach attempts to find the paradigmatic example of friendship; it attempts to evaluate competing conceptions of friendship. The *problématique* approach operates at the level of asking what function friendship plays in facilitating the political life at both a theoretical and practical level; it asks how friendship works on an ontological level.

Family resemblance and clusters

One especially convincing response to the question and problems surrounding the concept of friendship has been developed by Digeser (Digeser, 2013; Digeser, 2016; see also Lynch, 2005; Smith, 2011). Digeser avoids the problems of a central definition by developing an understanding of ‘friendship’ as both an instance of what Wittgenstein has called ‘family resemblance’ and conceptualises it as an Oakeshottian ‘practice’. The basic intuition behind the family resemblance concept is as follows: when faced with a term the temptation is to assume that there is one way to define this, and that all instances of the term exhibit or conform to that central definition. However, Wittgenstein urges his reader to ‘look and see’ (Wittgenstein, 1953: §66). Taking as his example the disparate practices called ‘games’, Wittgenstein points-out how they can be compared and contrasted. Wittgenstein sees ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing’ (Wittgenstein, 1953: §66). Thus, although games share features they do not all share the same features. It is this criss-crossing that links the games, not a central definition – they have a ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein, 1953: §67).

As developed by Digeser, friendship as family resemblance goes a long way to both alleviating some of the anxiety surrounding the definition of ‘friendship’ and showing what kind of a concept it might be (Digeser, 2016: 10-11). It moves away from the debilitating fetish of seeking a complete and final answer (debilitating because of the associated problems of definition mentioned above). The edges of such a concept are likely to be blurry, but this does not make the concept any less useful. Rather it reflects actual use. It also shows how different conceptions of friendship can co-exist, although this does not mean that individuals cannot ‘prefer’ certain conceptions of friendship.

In addition to the ‘family resemblance’ account developed by Digeser, it is also illuminating to consider the possibilities of a similar and connected approach: the ‘cluster concept’ (Gasking, 1960). Here people may hold different criteria for applying a word, but still use it for the same set of things. Gasking writes that:

When an omnifocal set is thought of in this way, as definable in terms of any member, any such definition being regarded as just as correct as any other, I call the set a ‘cluster’. (Gasking, 1960: 12)

Although similar to Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblance’ (cf. Parsons, 1973) Gasking’s view highlights two further considerations relevant for understanding the concept of friendship. First, people do – in fact – attempt to

use criteria to identify sets. Disputes arise because of differing views about what should belong to a given group. Defining membership of many groups is not simply analytic but can only be done in reference to a linguistic and cultural community. Friendship is especially subject to this. Second, Gasking's account emphasises how membership of the cluster can change. Items move in and out, and the cluster can lose members and include new ones (Gasking, 1960: 15, 23). This helps to account for both variation and innovation in what is considered to be friendship. 'Friendship' is a concept which denotes not only a group of members who share overlapping, but no core, features; it is also a concept which denotes a group of members which are subject to change and cultural variation.

These approaches help clarify what the concept of friendship is about, and how that concept relates to specific conceptions of friendship. It also opens a space for a consideration that some friendships can be political. In other words, the concept of friendship itself is neither political nor non-political, but certain conceptions of friendship might well be – and they are just as much friendship as any other conception of friendship.

Essentially Contested Concepts

Another way of approaching 'friendship' is to consider it an instance of Gallie's class of 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1956). Gallie distinguishes between concepts which are contested in the sense that there happens to be a dispute but where those disputes could (in theory) be resolved (Gallie, 1956: 167-168), and those concepts 'the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users' (Gallie, 1956: 169; Garver, 1978; cf. Smith, 2002). Whilst it might well be true that there are far fewer essentially contested concepts than might be first supposed (Smith, 2002), nevertheless friendship is a candidate for inclusion into this class of concepts. It is also not insignificant that the concept of politics itself can also be thought of in this way (Connolly, 1993).

Gallie outlines seven 'conditions of essential contestedness'. In summary, 'essentially contested concepts' are: (I) 'appraisive in the sense that it signifies or accredits some kind of valued achievement'; (II) internally complex (appraisal applies not just to the parts, but the whole); (III) have competing ways of evaluating the achievement which weight different aspects of the internal structure differently; (IV) the achievement can be modified; (V) and that those using the essentially contested concept recognise that others use it in a contested and competing way.

Furthermore, (VI) the concept is derived from a mutually recognised ‘exemplar’; and (VII) the contest for acknowledgement between the users of the concept sustains or develops the achievement (Gallie, 1956: 180).

‘Friendship’ can be thought of as an essentially contested concept in this sense. First (conditions (I) and (II)), friendship is ‘apprasive’ and a ‘valued achievement’ not just in terms of some of its features, but as a result of the whole. Indeed, in this respect it seems that friendship is universally valued across cultures and history, and there are numerous examples of true and worthy friendship which are contrasted to evaluations of friendships which have been false or corrupted. Second (conditions (III) and (IV)), it is clear that there could be any number of ways of practicing friendship, and thus friendship is ‘initially variously describable’ (Gallie, 1956: 172). Clearly, too, friendship changes or is modified; it has an ‘open’ character. What is more, different ‘traditions’ place different weight on the possible features of friendship thus producing different accounts (cf. Ruben, 2010: 268-269). Third, condition (V) is recognised in both the very theorisation of friendship and its practice. Not only do different thinkers recognise that they are in discussion about the meaning and practice of friendship, but friends themselves ‘compete’ to realise their versions of friendship. According to Garver, this ‘rhetorical situation’ is necessary to make a concept contested (Garver, 1978: 163). The contestation is generated by a linguistic community, not by the concept in abstraction. Finally, it might seem a bit peculiar to consider friendship as having an ‘exemplar’ (condition VI). However, this is to be understood broadly. Whilst there is not a single exemplar of friendship, the concept does have exemplars in terms of those who have produced paradigms and paragons of friendship, thus providing examples for others to emulate (on the notions of tradition and faithfulness to exemplars see Ruben, 2010: 262ff). Again, it is worth stressing that this endeavour is both trans-historical and cross-cultural. In relation to condition (VII) it would seem to be the case that in both the theorisation (and practice) of friendship the ‘achievement’ of friendship is being sustained and developed.

Such an approach contrasts with that of ‘family resemblance’ in the sense that whereas ‘family resemblance’ addresses questions of the coherence and use of an concept, Gallie’s notion contributes to an understanding about how a concept might work in terms of its development through interaction between rival users (Gallie, 1956: 198, 193). If Wittgenstein’s approach is to leave a concept in a state of useful vagueness, then Gallie’s approach is to show how people utilise that vagueness (cf. Ruben, 2010: 261). In the case of friendship, Gallie’s notion also captures some of the intuition about what kind of a concept friendship is and what is happening when competing conceptions are produced, or practices of friendship are compared. Such an approach clearly links back to the notion of a practice suggested by Digeser. Put succinctly: as an essentially contested concept, friendship might

have political aspects. Furthermore, there are also specifically political forms of friendship: civic friendship, political friendship, republican friendship, fraternity, comradeship, as well as friendship on the international stage. Each of these is a competing form of friendship, and there is competition within and between each conception to set the standard.

Problématique

The final way of approaching friendship is to understand the term as denoting a problématique. Problématique involves the theorisation and exploration of the bonds between person and person, or group and group (for examples see: King and Smith, 2007: 1-6; Devere and Smith, 2010: 341-344, 351-352; Smith, 2011: 1-15). Such an approach admits the diversity of friendship, but it also seeks to identify the deeper and wider questions and problems that connect specific manifestations and constructions to politics. Thus, it imagines persons not just in relationships of ‘power’, or as having ‘affective ties’, but also claims that friendship is ‘always shored up by moral principles of some kind or another’ (King and Smith, 2007: 6). In this view, friendship denotes a field of human relations which give rise to an order, but such relations and their order cannot be separated from axiological considerations.

Approaching friendship in this way moves away from definitions and refocuses attention to a set of questions. Such questions focus on the location and construction of subjectivity, the relationship between self and other, and identity and difference (Derrida, 1997, Schmitt, 1996). Such questions also ask about equality, shared activity, virtue, affection, care, and obligation. Importantly these questions speak to the co-construction and co-habitation of a shared world of order and value (Hayden, 2015). Such a world is not only the world of an interconnected friendship, it is also political. The self is always and necessarily connected to others, and must find a way of organising and valuing in this shared condition.

In taking friendship to be indicative of these questions, this final approach creates a problématique which is perhaps most obviously political, but which also moves away from standard conceptualisations of friendship (although this article has raised questions about such claims (cf. Smith, 2011)). Yet is it important to note what is going on here. For whilst this approach to friendship eschews the demand to define friendship (although see King, 2007), it is not unconcerned with the relationship of different conceptions of friendship to the concept of friendship as a problématique – indeed, it is dependent on it. In one construction this approach is concerned to show the

contours within which any conception of friendship must be framed. In this respect it provides analytical tools not for the definition of friendship, but for understanding the background conditions and assumptions that must be made in order for the construct to get off the ground. In another (but related) version, friendship operates on two levels. The anterior level is the basic binding that takes place between self and others; the second level is the crystallisation of these bonds into various identifiable forms of friendship (Smith, 2014). This view underlines the possibility of reconfiguring forms of friendship (and thus the political order that depends on them), but also stresses that we can never dispense with friendship itself.

In summary, this approach understands friendship to denote a set of questions that point to what is often overlooked in many conceptions of politics, but what is indispensable to any concept of politics: the necessity of the bonds between person and person, group and group. Without this connective tissue politics would be neither structured nor animated. This approach suggests that a theorisation of friendship is necessary for a successful theorisation of politics. Friendship therefore looks at the diverse and multifaceted bonds which (like politics) can manifest in any number of ways, but the concept itself points to a central problématique that attempts to theorise bonds between persons or groups in a shared world of order and value.

Conclusion

This article has undertaken groundwork preparing the way for future analyses of friendship and politics. Although some views are critical about the connection, this article has shown why these must not simply be accepted, but challenged. Critical views tend to rely on an overly restrictive view of ‘friendship’, a view which is not only culturally and historically contingent, but also a view which is in need of its own analysis. Addressing friendship, this article has outlined three possible approaches to understanding this concept. Specifically, friendship has been considered as: (1) a family-resemblance and cluster concept; (2) an essentially contested concept; and (3) indicative of a problématique. These approaches are not intended to be exhaustive – and scholars might well develop new ways of approaching friendship and politics.

In concluding it is desirable to offer comment on the relationship between these approaches. In particular, it might be asked to what extent they are compatible. To respond it is necessary to think of the approaches not only in terms of what they tell us about how friendship can be conceptualised, but also in terms of their underlying purposes or aims. In other words, the three approaches are not simply ways of conceptualising ‘friendship’, they

also represent different ways of deploying or using friendship. If the question of compatibility is seen from this perspective then it can be concluded that whilst the three approaches all focus on ‘friendship’ they are trying to achieve different things with that focus. As such, the question of compatibility cannot arise in a simple way.

To illustrate this consider the ‘family resemblance’ and ‘contested concept’ approaches first. Insofar as they both eschew the centrality of a final or standard definition of friendship they appear to be similar. However, this similarity is superficial. What the family resemblance approach attempts to do is not to define what friendship is, but to collect, collate, and examine the different ideas and practices that have been called friendship. The meaning of friendship is connected to its use, and there are a variety of ways that ‘friendship’ is used. Thus whilst forms of friendship can be differentiated, they are not measured against a standard. In contrast, the ‘contested concept’ approach operates in a different way. Whilst in the contested concept view there is an expectation that different forms of friendship will be identified the purpose is not to catalogue them but to evaluate them. Whilst the contested concept view accepts that there isn’t any final resolution to what counts as the paradigmatic case, contenders for the paradigmatic case are sought and used to assess other cases. In other words, the difference between the family resemblance approach and the contested concept approach is that whilst they both recognise that there are likely to be many examples of friendship, the family resemblance approach resists trying to discern a paradigmatic case by which they can be assessed whereas the contested concepts approach is precisely geared towards this. In this way, the family resemblance approach can be considered to be primarily concerned with a kind of ‘phenomenology’ (it tries to identify the kinds of things that are considered friendship) whereas the contested concepts approach is primarily concerned with ‘paradigmatic normativity’ (it tries to find a standard to be both emulated and by which other things that are called friendship can be evaluated). Thus, these two approaches are attempting to do different things. It could be, of course, that once a variety of friendship is identified (for example, political friendship), then it is possible to move from the phenomenological enquiry and into a game of contesting a paradigmatic case within that variety. However, ostensibly the two approaches are not compatible as one clearly eschews a central and defining case whereas this is precisely what the other seeks and is the source of the contestation.

This leaves the final approach: *problématique*. Again, this can be contrasted to the previous approaches which are about definition in the sense that they either try to identify the multiple ways that ‘friendship’ is used (family-resemblance), or try to identify a core or paradigmatic meaning of ‘friendship’ (contested concepts). Rather than focus on definition, *problématique* considers the function of friendship in politics. This approach looks to the

work that friendship does in holding politics together both in terms of the structures that it enables and the values that it promotes. In this way *problématique* presupposes a connection between friendship and politics and attempts to show how notions of friendship are already (and sometimes necessarily) operative in political theory and practice. Rather than attempt to say what friendship is, or what it should be, *problématique* looks at what friendship does. It is primarily concerned with how friendship holds politics together, and how it supports political action and values. In this way the question of compatibility with the other approaches does not arise in a straight-forward fashion as this approach is simply attempting to do a different kind of thing with friendship.

This article has identified and explored some of the existing literature on friendship as a political concept, both sceptical and supportive. It has also proposed three approaches to understanding friendship, and has suggested that each is attempting to achieve something different in making the connection between friendship and politics. As such, this article has undertaken groundwork making a *prima facie* case for the possibility of an analysis of friendship as a political concept. The way is now open for others to build on this and to produce understandings and conceptualisations of friendship and politics. Such work promises not only to reconnect politics with a neglected concern, but also to provide new ways of theorising and exploring an increasingly globalised, cross-cultural and complex political scene.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers and to Astrid HM Nordin for offering valuable comments on this article.

References

- Aristotle (1992) *The Politics*. England: Penguin Books.
- Berenskoetter F (2007) Friends, there are no friends? an intimate reframing of the international. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35(3): 647-676.
- Cocking D and Kennett J (2000) Friendship and moral danger. *The Journal of Philosophy* 97(5): 278-296.
- Connolly WE (1993) *The Terms of Political Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Derrida J (1997) *The Politics of Friendship*. London: Verso.

- Devere H (1999) Reviving Greco-Roman friendship: a bibliographical review. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2(4): 149-187.
- Devere H and King P (2000) *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Devere H and Smith GM (2010) Friendship and politics. *Political Studies Review* 8(3): 341-356.
- Devere H, Mark S and Verbitsky J (2011) A history of the language of friendship in international treaties. *International Politics* 48(1): 46-70.
- Devere H. (2013) Amity update: the academic debate on friendship and politics, *AMITY: The Journal of Friendship Studies* 1(1): 5-33.
- Digester PE (2016) *Friendship Reconsidered: What It Means and How It Matters to Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Digester PE (2009a) Friendship between states. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(2): 323-44.
- Digester PE (2009b) Public reason and international friendship. *Journal of International Political Theory* 5(1): 22-40.
- Digester PE (2013) Friendship as a family of practices. *AMITY: The Journal of Friendship Studies*. 1(1): 34-52.
- Farrands, C (2001) Touching friendship beyond friendship: friendship and citizenship in global politics. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26(2): 143-73.
- Fitzgerald JT (1997) *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Friedman M (1993) *What Are Friends For? : Feminist Perspectives on Personal Relationships and Moral Theory*. United States: Cornell University Press.
- Gallie WB (1956) Essentially contested concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56: 167-198.
- Gandhi L (2006) *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin De Siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Garver E (1978) Rhetoric and essentially contested arguments. *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 11(3): 156-172.
- Gasking D (1960) Clusters. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*. 38(1): 1-36.
- Grunebaum JO (2003) *Friendship*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- Haseldine J (1999) *Friendship in Medieval Europe*. Stroud: Sutton.
- Hayden P (2015) From political friendship to befriending the world. *The European Legacy* 20(7): 745-64.
- Healy M (2011) Civic friendship. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30(3): 229-40.
- Heyking Jv and Avramenko R (2008) *Friendship and Politics: Essays In Political Thought*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Hutter H (1978) *Politics As Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Kahane D (1999) Symposium: diversity, solidarity and civic friendship. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7(3): 267-86.
- Kaplan D (2007) What can the concept of friendship contribute to the study of national identity?. *Nations and Nationalism* 13(2): 225-244.
- Keller S (2009) Against friendship between countries. *Journal of International Political Theory* 5(1), 59-74.
- King PT (2007) Friendship in Politics. In: King PT and Smith GM (eds) *Friendship in Politics*. Oxford: Routledge, pp.9-30.
- King PT and Smith G (2007) *Friendship in Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Koschut S and Oelsner A (2014) *Friendship and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lalumera E (2013) On the explanatory value of the concept-conception distinction. *Rivista Italiana filosofia del linguaggio*: 73-81.
- Lu C (2009) Political friendship among peoples, *Journal of International Political Theory* 5(1): 41-58.
- Lynch S (2005) *Philosophy and Friendship*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Marx K and Engels F (1970) *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- May T (2012) *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism*. US: Lexington Books.
- Nordin AHM (2017) Decolonising friendship. In; *International Studies Association*. Baltimore, USA, 20-25 February 2017.
- Oelsner A and Vion A (2011) Friends in the region: a comparative study on friendship building in regional integration. *International Politics* 48(1): 129-151.
- Pahl R (2000) *On Friendship*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Pangle LS (2003) *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parsons KP (1973) Three concepts of clusters. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33(4): 514-523.
- Roshchin E (2006) The concept of friendship: from princes to states. *European Journal of International Relations* 12(4): 599-624.
- Roshchin E (2011) Friendship of the enemies: twentieth century treaties of the United Kingdom and the USSR. *International Politics* 48(1): 71-91.
- Rouner LS (1994) *The Changing Face of Friendship*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Ruben DH (2010) W.B. Gallie and essentially contested concepts. *Philosophical Papers* 39(2): 257-270.
- Schmitt C (1996) *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schmitt C (1996) *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Schwarzenbach SA (1996) On civic friendship. *Ethics* 107(1): 97-128.
- Schwarzenbach SA (2005) Democracy and friendship. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36(2): 233-54.
- Schwarzenbach SA (2009) *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Scorza JA (2004) Liberal citizenship and civic friendship. *Political Theory* 32(1): 85-108.
- Shannon L (2002) *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith GM (2011) *Friendship and the Political : Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schmitt*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
- Smith GM (2014) Friendship, state, and nation. In Koschut S and Oelsner A (eds) *Friendship and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.35-50.
- Smith K (2002) Mutually contested concepts and their standard general use. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 2(3): 329-343.
- Spencer L and Pahl R (2006) *Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities Today*.;Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Stroud S (2006) Epistemic partiality in friendship. *Ethics* 116(3): 498-524.
- Vernon M (2010) *The Meaning of Friendship*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vernon R (2005) *Friends, Citizens, Strangers: Essays on Where We Belong*. Toronto: University Of Toronto Press.
- Wellman, CH (2001) Friends, compatriots, and special political obligations. *Political Theory* 29(2): 217-36.
- Wittgenstein L (1953) *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.