



## Travel through the treasure regions

The terrain to be discovered is that of friendship; and the treasure, the good friend. It's going to be just a reconnaissance of the terrain.

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Every man carries with himself parts of an adventurous soul. To explore and conquer are sometimes the torrents by which this passion is displeased. But the impetus of new launches not only impels to furrow seas, to wade rivers, to climb mountains or, in our time, to devote to the so-called, high-risk sports; you can also enter with intrepidity in the writings. That is the illusion of these pages: to trace the clues of a treasure by various regions of thought, especially Greco-Roman, without leaving aside the Christian feeling. The terrain to be discovered is that of friendship; and the treasure, the good friend. It's going to be just a reconnaissance of the terrain and not a thorough analysis of every span of land.

## Friendship in the Greek cultural world

1. And we open ourselves to the classical world, specifically to Greece, the cultural cradle of Europe and, at present, for some season, one of its bitter nightmares.

Before the philosophy about friendship, the Greeks lived the poetics of this human value. Before they practiced it, they did (ποίησιν); then they expressed it in the

poetics of epic verses. Poetic and epic, twinned. Only thirdly they went on to philosophize about friendship. Practice before theory, as a living *hysteron proteron*, so consistent with the active and resolved spirit of those Greeks.

There are the Homeric poems, which are about three or four centuries ahead of Plato's and Aristotle's considerations about friendship. In Homer, the poetics and the epic of friendship are twinned. Still excited and shocked in the *Iliad*, friendship between Achilles and Patroclus. The devastating anger of the first one is gradually tempering with the sensitivity of the second. Patroclus asks him to fight against the Trojans, for they are about to take the Achaeans ships. Achilles refuses. It remains in the power of the anger, moral protagonist of more than half of the poem, caused by the abduction of its slave Briseida at the hands of Agamemnon. But when Patroclus, the friend, asks his weapons for the Trojans to confuse him and asks his troop of Myrmidons to leave him, like other Achilles, to move away from the Trojans, Achilles bends, get rid of the anger and accedes. Suspect that Patroclus is heading to death, which cannot come to him but of its rival: Hector. But Peleo's son admires the friendship he professes Patroclus and the gesture of wanting to appear as his alter ego, as second Achilles, dressed in his armor. The same Trojans, seeing Patroclus think that the son of Thetis "had renounced his anger and had preferred friendship." The 16th rhapsody is thus a dynamic hymn to friendship in the midst of war. And in the final song of the work, Achilles, before Priam who asks him, imploringly, the corpse of his son, cries « sometimes to his father; others, to Patroclus ».

Peleo and Patroclus, the father and the friend, respectively, are little less than equated in love. The bonds of blood and those of friendship, balanced: so much is friendship able of.

In the universe of Greek tragedy, the legendary friendship between Orestes and Pylades is a highlight.

In that hemisphere of Greek culture, then Plato and Aristotle will be the ones who theorize on friendship, already widely personified and staged in literature. Plato does so in *Lysis*, first Inquisition effort in Greek philosophy to "define" friendship to narrow it down from the simple utility that the friend can offer. Aristotle, mainly in *Ethics for Nicomachus*, sees this virtue as one of the pillars that sustain its ethical philosophy. In the *Ethics for Nicomachus* it reserves to the *philia* the book VIII, especially chapters eighth and ninth. In that reflection and rule of life he writes for

his son, he emphasizes that friendship is the basis of human coexistence. It is more about loving than being loved. Therefore, the refined friendship should not be closed in the circle of the flatterers, who immediately reward the friend with the coin of praise and even of flattery. Aristotle's meditation is projected towards selfless friendship. Without friendship, you can't live. In adversity and prosperity, the friend is irreplaceable support: "The presence of friends in good fortune leads to spending time pleasantly and to be aware that friends enjoy with our well being. That is why we must invite them to our joys, because it is noble to do well to others, and we have to avoid inviting them to participate in our misfortune because evils must be shared as little as possible. However, we must call them by our side when they are to be of help to us. "In particular their presence is necessary when the setbacks of the life come: «The friends are needed in prosperity and misfortune since the miserable one needs benefactors, and the fortunate people to whom to do well». As a summary, the stagirite writes lapidary: "The happy man also needs friends". And the ninth chapter concludes by qualifying these friends: "Man, then, if he is to be happy, he will need virtuous friends." Friendship, like the other virtues, has in Aristotle a eudaimonic end. Aristotelian ethics pursues the ideal of happiness, and friendship is a column that cannot be missed in the building of its ethics. If we want a summary of Aristotelian thought about friendship, let us go to this synthesis left by Peter Laín-Entralgo: «In sum, the friendship for Aristotle consists in wanting and seeking the good of the friend himself, but understood this as an individual realization of human nature and, ultimately, of universal nature. The perfection of this would, therefore, be the goal of friendship. "

In the hemisphere of Latin letters

2. In the Latin hemisphere there is perhaps an investment: chronologically reflects on friendship before reviewing live sculptures of it, at least if we allude to the most marked works that have come to us. Already the poet Quintus Ennio (239-169 BC), close to the circle of the Escipions, leaves in the few verses of his preserved a definition of the full friend: «Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur». More original verse by the alliteration, that by the content, it collects what we already read in Aristotle.

A century later, Cicero, in his essay on friendship, will borrow that same characterization of the friend. No doubt that Ennio collected in his annals, influenced by the Homeric style, examples of friendship in the heroes of his verses. This work, which has arrived so mutilated to us, exerted in its turn remarkable influx in Virgil for its Aeneid. Well, the famous tratadito of Cicero is the essential

text when one speaks about the friendship, not only in the Latin letters but in the western thought. The speaker dedicates the pages to Pomponio Attic, which, by the way, already establishes another living testimony of his friendship: he writes about friendship to a friend. By the characters of the dialogue, it expresses the importance of preserving the friendship, both for the kindness that in itself encloses and for the nexus of concord that establishes among the good ones. Cicero leaves a record of tips: duration of friendship (nn. 33-35), negative laws (nn. 36-43) and positive (NN. 44-61) of this virtue, choice, and cultivation of friendships (NN. 62-76), tips to avoid break-ups with friends (NN. 77-100). The thinker defines friendship as the concord of all the divine and the human in benevolence and love. It also exalts her as the greatest heavenly gift; at the same rate, in any case, of wisdom. And the true friend defines it as a mirror of oneself: «Verum enim amicum qui intuetur, tamquam exemplar Aliquod intuetur Sui».

Seneca, years later, insists on the topic of having the friend as alter ego, indispensable condition to make true friendship. «Si aliquem amicum existimas cui non tantundem credis quantum tibi, Vehemente err et non satis nosti vim verae amicitiae». And then points out the need for a previous sieve of the friend, to get to have him like another me. It would be unfortunate to examine after loving, to stop loving after that discernment. «Tu vero Omnia i amico deliberates, sed de ipso prius: post amicitiam credendum est, ante amicitiam iudicandum. Isti vero praepostero officia permiscent qui, contra praecepta Theophrasti, cum amaverunt iudicant, et non amant iudicaverunt. Diu cogita an tibi in amicitiam aliquis recipiendus sit. Cum placuerit fieri, toto illum pectore-admitte; tam audaciter illo loquendo quam tecum».

There are in Latin literature simpler definitions of friendship than Cicero's. I always thought the best one that collects Sallust: «Idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum signature amicitia est». Only that the context and the lips that come out are creepy: Lucio Sergio Catilina, a few hours before he wanted to upset the republic with a coup d'état, exhorts the conjured pondering them the strength of their mutual friendship. The enemy of the democracy of Rome, in a raptured discourse, competes, in defining friendship, against his mortal enemy, the consul and orator Cicero, who years later will reflect on this human value in the quiet trial of Amicitia! And what is most striking is that, because of its wise conciseness, the definition of unruly Catilina has been quoted much more than that of the consul who dynamited the attempt of some outlaws under the command of Catilina. «Idem velle atque idem nolle»: It was what they felt Niso and Eurialo. And we have already passed to the Roman friendship embodied in the heroes. Aeneas himself grieves at the loss of the friend Palinuro, the faithful helmsman who falls to the sea, defeated, oh! By the dream God. But in the Aeneid it is touchingly the friendship between the two young Niso and Eurialo. «His amor unus erat pariterque in bella ruebant». Thus

characterizes Virgilio the theoretical and practical friendship of these two young Trojans, already appeared in the world of the Iliad. And it's going to show in the trance of death. Eurialo, more fledgling in hauls of danger, has asked Niso to accompany him to go also in search of Aeneas. Niso does not refuse, but in case of danger, he prefers the young companion to survive. Said and done. The Rutuli surprise Eurialo trapped in the branch, and apprehend him, while Niso has managed to escape. It launches two veils that cross to send enemies, Sulmón and Tago. But when Volcente is going to make the prisoner pay Eurialo the deaths caused by his clandestine friend, Niso bursts out screaming: « Me, Me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum, or Rutuli! Mea fraus omnis, nihila nec ausus nec potuit; caelum hoc et conscia sidea testor. Tantum infelicem nimium dilexit amicum». The last verse is well worth not only as epiphoneme, but as an epitaph of the friendship of Niso to Eurialo and, in general, of any friend who boasts of such. The same Virgil is not contained and, excited, and tears the narration to peek and weave the praise itself to these two friends: «Fortunati ambo! Si quid mea carmina postsunt, nulla dies umquam memori vos exemptt aevo». Virgil's always youthful spirit feels impelled to celebrate the epic of these two companions. And if we are also allowed to break into the Virgilian scenario, we will confess that, in the studies of humanities, when crossed the same age as the two protagonists, we filled with emotion the history of their friendship, while we cleared, with sweat and the hard Salamanca banks, the then entangled Virgilian hexameters. It guided us in appreciation of Virgil a humanist sage, Alfonso Ortega Carmona. In his latin poetic classes, this pleasant Franciscan did not get tired of calling Virgil the poet of youth and, above all, the noster poet, taking advantage of the title given to him by St. Augustine and the riveting Dante Alighieri, another Virgilian devout. The episode of the two faithful friends in life and death inextricably connects the idem velle, idem nolle salustiano with the amicus certus in re incerta cernitur by Ennio. To faith of the most beautiful pages of the human anthology about friendship!

In addition to this epic film, Virgil dedicates to friendship his bucolic pages. The shepherds of their eclogues are often linked by friendship. The poet's written sensibility was the transfer of a life full of friends; Patron and Horatio being the greatest. And, by Patron, Horace and Virgil he acceded to the friendship with Augustus himself.

Proof of this reciprocal friendship is given to us by Horacio when he calls Virgil: "Animate dimidium meae". And he dedicates yet another ode, to comfort him by the death of Quintilio Varo, another great friend of Virgil. Horacio himself begins the first book of his Carmina with a commendation to patrons. He calls him: "Amparo and sweet decorum" while exalting his vocation as a poet nourished by the liberality of patrons. Poems later recognize him "part of my soul", without which he, the other party, cannot live full and recognizes for both the same fate:

«Utrumque nostrum Incredibili consensual astrum mode». It may be thought that Horacio is interested in friendship with patrons; for that reason, because he was his protector, his patron – never better said? But, in discharge of this observation, it must also be noted that Virgil dedicates similar praises of friendship to him, and he did not owe him great favours because, like him, he was protected he is a patron. On the other hand the poet of Venusia does give ground to the flattery when he flatters Augustus too much. I leave here to the side of the friendship of Horacio with several young and Roman matrons.

In the Sapiential books of the Bible

3. From the classic region of the country of friendship, we can take a step to another, which is often symmetrical: the Judeo- Christian. We start from the praise that the Bible is taxed on friendship. The book of Proverbs and that of Ecclesiastes devote many verses to friendship. Thoughts delve into human feeling about that value. That's why they feed on the same sap as the Greeks and Latin literati featured above: the *humanitas*. The gift of having a friend is weighted: treasure, medicine... «*Amicus fidelis protectio fortis: qui autem invenit illum, invenit thesaurum. Amico fideli nulla est comparatio, et non est digna ponderatio auri et argenti contra bonitatem fidei illius. Amicus fidelis medicamentum vitæ et immortalitatis: Et qui metuunt Dominum, invenient illum*». And again the need to prove to the friend is discovered.

In the score — *tentatio, temptatio* — of the test, which is the equivalent of Ennio's *res incerta*: «*Si possides Amicum, in Tentatione postside eum, et ne facile credas ei*».

This record confirms in the experience several examples of friendship. Perhaps the most luminous and often weighted is that of David and Jonathan. «*Inierunt autem David et Jonathas fœdus: diligebat enim eum quasi animam suam*». His soul brought together in one, as the sacred text expresses graphically: «*Anima Jonathæ conglutinata est animæ David, et dilexit eum Jonathas quasi animam suam*». The expression is repeated even again and is similar to the Horacian with respect to Virgil: «*Animate Dimidium Meae*». And it is because authentic friendship feeds on the same love of man is in the biblical field, be it in the pagan, and tends to tie without stopping much lies in different cultures.

## The Christian world of friendship

4. The journey through the Christian world of friendship inevitably leads to the gospel. Jesus elects the twelve apostles. He does not treat them as servants; that would have been a utilitarian relationship without having exceeded, at most, the dikes of the interested friendship: companions to serve Him; his servants, after all. Not even his dealings with them are teacher only, even though they refer to him as the chosen twelve because he teaches them like no other. He calls them friends: «Iam non dicam vos servos: quia servus nescit quid faciat dominus ejus. Vos autem dixi amicos». Between him and them is established a society and alliance of unwavering friendship, sealed with blood: He will give it for them; many of yours are to be poured out for him. 'Maiorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat qui pro amicis suis', had taught him. And he gave that lesson of friendship: he died for them. No one has ever surpassed his example of selfless friendship, overwhelmed by the philia to the agápe. With reason: «Maiorem hac dilectionem nemo» habuit! And they learned the lesson of the master: they also died for him, most of them in a brutal way.

## Between Milan and Tagaste

5. In the history of Christianity, it is mandatory to look at the Holy Fathers. I will stop in two, whose lives crisscrossed providentially. Ambrosio of Milan, very imbued with the humus and the Humanitas both Latin and Christian, writes about friendship. He reserves two chapters — XXI-XXII of the treaty of Officiis Ministrorum. Debtor in his title, structure and style, as it is known, of the Officiis of Cicero but, in its content, brimming with the biblical wisdom, especially of the Ecclesiastes and of the proverbs: «Aperi excavatum tuum amico, ut fidelis sit tibi et capias ex eo vitae tuae jucunditatem. Fidelis enim amicus medicamentum est vitae, et immortalitatis gratia (Ecclesiastes 6,16). Defer amico ut aequali, nec te pudeat ut praevenias amicum officio; amicitia enim nescit superbiam». And, as a living frame of his reflections, he extends the example of friendship of David and Jonathan.

Contemporary and Ambrosio's admirer, Augustine of Hippo lives the friendship as a vital necessity. No friends, no Augustine. In The Confessions there are memories of several friends who were joined by the true human and Christian friendship. The saint of Hippo describes it thus, with verbs of biblical roots: «Non est vera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinates inter haerentes sibi caritae diffusa in Cordibus nostris per

Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis». Several friends shaped his life. Being twenty years old, he enjoyed the friendship, as intense as it was brief, of a young man his age, although known from childhood when they were both students. He doesn't give us his name. Brief — he pointed, because it lasted only a year, due to the death of the friend. But, yes, very intense: the friendship with this companion was for Agustín «dulcis nimis» and soft «super omnes suavitates Illius vitae meae».

Without him he could not live anymore: «Et non poterat anima mea sine illo». His death was also morally for Augustine, plunged in utter uneasiness and made a living question for himself: «Quidquid aspiciebam mors erat. Et erat mihi patria supplicium et paterna domus mira congratulates [...]. Et oderam omnia quod non haberent eum, nec mihi iam dicee poterant: "Ecce veniet", Sicut cum viveret, quando dissenso erat. Factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio». For him the friendship with this companion was to have a soul in two bodies. It is a beautiful Augustinian definition of friendship, which completes the characterization «dimidium animae» of the poet Horacius, quoted also by Augustine. Friendship as agglutination or conglutinating of souls, which makes the same spirit, with its burden of judgments, emotions and feelings, is in two different bodies.

Alipius, another friend, his disciple and, like him, from Tagaste, calls him "brother of my heart." The two shared the catechumenate.

Nebridius is also "dulcis amicus meus". As "inquisitor ardentissimus veritatis" he was, he converted to Christianity, and not long after he died. Conversing, laughing, reading with his friends, having fun in their company; even correcting each other... Nice and picturesque the picture with which Augustine describes the friendship in action. In truth, few human spirits have felt so intensely how friendship captivated their souls.

Allusion to the middle Ages

6. Leaping the middle Ages, we found in the 12th and 13th centuries some treatises on friendship. De spiritali amicitia highlights, who wrote the English abbot Elredo de Rieval — Rielvaulx (1110-1167). He directed it to his Cistercian monks from the monastery of Rielvaulx. According to the abbot, friendship must have four



elements: dilectio, affectio, securitas, lucunditas. In addition to the wise considerations on this virtue, he goes, like other Christian authors, to the well-known example of David and Jonathan: «O praeclarissimum verae amicitiae speculum! Look res! » Also for those same years Pierre de Blois Petrus Blesensis (c. 1135-C. 1211) published a booklet titled De Amicitia Christiana, in which he collected on this virtue many thoughts of both the Sacred Scriptures and the classical world, especially Cicero.

This has been the tour through several literary and philosophical regions of the friendship. We've been tracking the treasure. The journey has been swift, incomplete; more superficial reconnaissance of the terrain; almost to bird's eye, that of deepening into it. There are many other places to explore, especially in the different literatures after the middle Ages. They will give new shades to that human value. It was not the task of these lines to invade those boundaries. Still, we have overflowed wonderful places. And, above all, we have valued friendship, one of the essential nerves of humanitas.

It remains to be seen that we have found the coveted treasure: friendship. It is a value that has been essential in the Greco-Roman culture. Value that, in the last decades, seems to cloud: the friend? By definition, interested and upstart? Attentive to displace the authentic friend; the friend, simply and without adjectives. Even sometimes it is called today a friend who keeps murky pretensions that are demanded as human rights, when they seem rather "twisted" inhuman. We must rescue the friendship and restore to the friend the post of honor that had in the spirit of the West and the Judeo-Christian world.

The complete friend. In truth: «qui autem invenit illum, invenit thesaurum». It's a good reason to carry the Bible!