

International Friendship as Empowerment

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Friendship Matters

The aim of this paper is to stimulate thinking about how we think about friendship and power by reading the latter through the former. It offers some preliminary explorations of the various ways power operates in and out of friendship by asking about both the power operating 'internally' (within friendship relations) and 'externally' (how friendship affects others). The paper suggests that friendship relations exercise power in two basic ways, one of mutual empowerment (the internal effect) and one of agenda setting in building international order (the external effect). In both cases, friendship exerts power in a creative/transformational rather than merely a conservative/exclusionary sense.

The discussion builds on the view that a friendship lens adds analytical value to our understanding of international politics. While claims of 'friendship' and 'special relationships' are found regularly in the political discourse and while 'the friend' is a

word commonly used, the International Relations (IR) literature contains very little substantial thinking about the meaning of friendship between ‘states’.¹ Even among those (constructivists) emphasizing a social ontology, that is, on the relation between Self and a ‘significant Other’, the latter either takes on the form of an enemy or becomes diluted in general notions of ‘community’ or ‘group’. Where friendship is discussed it is done thinly, portraying it as either a mere opposite of enmity or as a label for states forming a non-war community (Wendt 1999; Adler and Barnett 1998). Yet friendship is much more than a relationship in which disputes are settled by ‘peaceful means’. Thinkers going all the way back to Aristotle have a much richer understanding of friendship as a relationship characterized by trust, openness, honesty, acceptance, reciprocity, solidarity and loyalty (Fehr 1996: 3-16). Friendship also does not designate a bond among (potentially) all humankind, but is a special or *intimate* relationship.² The sociologists’ view that ‘true’ friends are few in number is echoed by moral philosophers who see friendship as a particular and morally significant relationship. It strengthens moral certainty and the sense of what is ‘the right thing to do’. This is linked to another baseline assumption namely that friendship matters because it moulds and reinforces ‘identity’, or the sense of Self (Allan 1989: 59ff; Pahl 2000: 68f). As I argue elsewhere, the intimacy of friendship satisfies desires of belonging and recognition while at the same time allowing the maintenance of a sense of authenticity within a social relationship (Berenskoetter 2007a).

Rethinking Power³

While ‘friendship’ and ‘power’ are not commonly read together, doing so is important if, with Karl Deutsch (1967), we understand political relations are relations of ‘power’. Gaining a better understanding of ‘power’ operating between and through friends, then, helps locating the political in friendship. And it allows moving away from the rudimentary Schmittian reading of politics as making the distinction between friends and enemies.⁴ The challenge is that ‘power’ is an essentially contested

¹ The main reason is that most theorizing in IR builds on the liberal ontology of the state as an autonomy-seeking entity, an assumption underlying not only realism but also its institutionalist and constructivist derivatives. Indeed, modernity’s concern with individualism poses the greatest challenge for conceiving of friendship across disciplines (King and Devere 2000).

² To be sure, whether one looks at Aristotle or contemporary scholarship, there is no blueprint or ‘typical’ form of friendship (Allan, 1989; Porter and Tomaselli, 1989; Fehr, 1996).

³ This section is adopted from Berenskoetter (2007b).

⁴ While friends may come to agree on a common enemy, no serious philosophy/sociology of friendship considers enmity vis-à-vis third parties to be a necessary condition for creating bonds of friendship.

concept. While long dominated by realists, who over time reduced its meaning (misleadingly) to ‘military resources’, it is useful to return to Max Weber for capturing some of the key features of ‘power’.

Weber defined power, the German *Macht*, as the “opportunity [Chance] to have one’s will prevail [durchsetzen] within a social relationship, also against resistance, no matter what this opportunity is based on” (Weber 1976: 28, my translation). This definition is remarkably rich. First, and most obviously, it points out that power is a relational phenomenon that cannot be grasped without first identifying a social relationship. Weber (1976: 13) defines a social relationship as a phenomenon where the meaning frame within which the individuals’ will is formed and behavior takes place is “mutually adjusted and oriented towards each other”. Hence, identifying whether and how individuals stand in a power relationship requires the identification of the meaning context, that is, a shared system of values. Second, as an opportunity, or potential, which does not have to be realized, the definition suggests that identifying power has much to do with identifying the position someone is placed in vis-à-vis others, which allows seeing power as both ‘capability’ and ‘effect’. Third, the qualification that meeting and overcoming resistance is not a necessary feature can be interpreted that power means accomplishing one’s will not only against but also with others, thus encompassing phenomena of both resistance and cooperation. Thus Weber also allows for the notion of empowerment, or ‘power to’, and leaves open the possibility that a power relationship is not necessarily hierarchical, as implied in the notion of ‘power over’.

Yet instead of developing the notion of empowerment, Weber spoke of different facets of power more specifically in the context of *Herrschaft* – translated into English as authority, domination, rule, or governance – which he defines as “the opportunity to find obedience amongst specified persons for a given order” (Weber 1976: 28, my translation). Such obedience, Weber suggests, is based on a belief in the legitimacy of the command motivated, more specifically, by rational cost-benefit calculation, custom, or personal affection. In crude terms, these three types attribute

After all, the very reason why sociologists have long ignored friendship is because it is in many respects an inward-oriented relationship. In other words, while friendship does have external effects (see below), it excludes but does not automatically oppose others.

the willingness to follow orders to a technical, a habitual, and an emotional relationship. As such, *Herrschaft* describes ways of having one's will prevail without using force (physical violence) and, thus, describes power as a psychological phenomenon. While many of the above insights are important for what follows, Weber's notion of *Herrschaft* is of limited use when searching for the power in friendship. Grounded in phenomena of obedience, it always invites being reduced to Robert Dahl's famous notion of power as 'A making B do something it would otherwise not to', thus viewing the power relationship between A and B as one of power *over*. A more useful angle is provided by Hannah Arendt, whose conception of power as empowerment sits uneasily with Weber's definition of *Macht* and is formulated in opposition to his notion of *Herrschaft*. Rooted in an Aristotelian understanding of human nature, Arendt defines power as "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (Arendt 1970: 44). While she echoes Weber's emphasis on power as a social phenomenon and its need for legitimacy – which, for Arendt, is derived from the group coming together – she does not see it as being expressed in obedience. Instead, Arendt sees power as *creative*, as something productive, as a phenomenon of empowerment emerging through togetherness exemplified in non-violent resistance movements. This communal, or consensual, conception of power, also found in Parsons, shifts the focus away from Weber's emphasis on the 'prevailing will' to the extent that 'acting in concert' creates something new that has not been there before. The following will demonstrate the usefulness of Arendt's reading for understanding how power operates in friendship.

Friendship as World Building

When asking how friendship forms one comes across the notion of 'attraction'. Understood as a force through which two (or more) are 'magnetically' drawn towards each other, attraction is a phenomenon of power. Yet while the assumption that friendships form and are sustained because there is some sort of mutual 'attraction' is commonsensical, the problem is to conceptualize and measure it. IR scholars have come to recognize the role of attraction under the heading of 'soft power' yet have not gotten very far in conceptualizing it (e.g., Nye 2004, 2007; Bially Mattern 2007). This paper will sidestep the task of elaborating the precise meaning of 'attraction' and instead focus on the more fundamental question what it is based on and through what kinds of power mechanisms it operates.

If we understand the friend as a ‘significant Other’ defined as that one “whose opinion matters most” (Hoelter 1984: 255), we may use Peter Blau’s suggestion that, generally speaking, attraction rests on approving of each others opinions (Blau 1964: 69). In answering the question ‘opinions about what?’ it is useful to adopt David Kahane’s (1999) strategy and juxtapose two readings of friendship.⁵ The first type is what he calls ‘object-centered’ friendship. It emphasises that friendship is based primarily on attributes inherent in the friend, “specific values or virtues or understandings or assets that draws us to them”. It is, crudely put, an essentialist reading of friendship which suggests that bonds are created because the actors involved share intrinsic ‘properties’, that is, because they are the ‘same’. Kahane suggests that this reading is the dominant one both in Aristotle’s friendship of virtue and in contemporary theories of citizenship which explain civic bonds “in terms of shared understandings of the public good”. His basic criticism of this reading is that it does not allow for difference within friendship and that it carries a rather teleological or, one might say, totalizing view of friendship (Kahane 1999: 270; this critique has also been levelled by Arendt and Derrida).

The second is what he calls ‘relationship-centered’ friendship, which emphasises not properties but the relationship as such for “its value as a formative process over time”. He favours this reading because it allows for a certain ‘distance’ between friends, that is, it allows for the fact that friends may not completely agree about everything. Rather than suggesting that friendship is built on ‘sameness’, this account gives room for pluralist understandings of ‘the good’ which is complex and may even contain contradictions. It thus carries a more pluralist/heterogonous understanding of friendship and points to the relationship as a site where differences can be ‘bridged’. It shifts the perspective from individual attributes to the relationship of friendship as something developed ‘in-between’ friends (Kahane 1999: 270). As Kahane puts it friends need not have the ‘same’ perspective on everything but “[they] ‘triangulate’, in effect, on a third object – the friendship itself” (Kahane 1999: 279).

⁵ Kahane differentiates between three types of friendship, though he does not really elaborate on the second one which he calls ‘capacity centered’.

This second ('relationship-centered') perspective offers important advantages for thinking about friendship. It must be qualified, though. Not only does Aristotle have important insights to offer in support of this perspective, I also think that such a reading can very well accommodate the idea that friendship involves general agreement about an idea of order/the good life, as one does not need to see such an agreement as complete, or total. In the reading employed here, friendship is a dynamic process in which a shared understanding of the good life is negotiated and re-affirmed through practice, which also directs attention to the friendship as a process of empowerment.

Before expanding on these thoughts for understanding friendship between *states*, it is necessary to briefly pause and clarify the underlying conception of 'the state'. The reading employed here is slightly different from the classic (Weberian) one generally employed by IR scholars and adopts the constructivist view of the state as a collective possessing an 'identity', or sense of Self. More precisely, I assume that states seek to generate and maintain a *stable* sense of Self or what an increasing number of IR scholars, following Anthony Giddens (1991), call 'ontological security'. An ontological security perspective holds that uncertainty motivates societies to construct structures of meaning across space and time which provide cognitive and emotional stability.⁶⁷ These are formulated and contained in narratives about where society comes from and where it is (or should be) going providing orientation in 'the world' (Ringmar 1996; Anderson 1999; Bially Mattern 2005; Steele 2008). Central to this narrative is an idea of order composed of guiding principles – norms and values – manifesting what counts as normal or 'good' behaviour.⁸ By laying out a certain "logic of appropriateness", ideas of order structure expectations (March and Olson 1998) and thereby not only prescribe a desirable future order but also guide the selection of appropriate means to get there.

Against this backdrop, interstate (or international) friendship is defined here as an intimate relationship in which those involved share significant structures of meaning,

⁶ McSweeney (1999); Mattern (2005); Steele (2005); Mitzen (2006); Roe (2008). For an argument that takes Heidegger rather than Giddens as the philosophical reference point, see Berenskoetter (2007a).

⁷ As Crawford (2000) points out, the cognitive and the emotional are intertwined.

⁸ The notion that security is about protecting certain values has been re-engaged more recently by Smith (2005) and Roe (2008).

specifically an understanding of international order, which both consider desirable and possible, and which is negotiated on the basis of overlapping, or intertwined national biographies.⁹ It is important to emphasize that the notion of ‘overlapping/intertwined’ means there is no total merger of respective narratives; instead, one might say they resonate with each other.¹⁰ Equally, resonance is not ‘natural’, which would open the door to an ‘object-centered’ reading, but established in negotiation over the shared idea of international order. Furthermore, although it draws on shared experiences and an agreement of ‘lessons learned’, this shared understanding of international order is future oriented in the sense that it is about *building* that order in a common project lending significance to the future.¹¹ Thus, one might say that states form a friendship through a shared project of ‘world building’ where commitment is confirmed through practices considered by both sides as adequate investments towards realising the shared vision of international order.

Friendship as Empowerment

The project of shared world building allows devising a shared orientation in time and space both sides feel comfortable with. As noted by all scholars since Aristotle, friendship is an important source for moral growth and provision of happiness. By taming anxiety and providing self-confidence within an intimate space, friendship allows for authentic becoming; it strengthens Self-confidence and, in this sense, mutually enhances a sense of Self-sufficiency.¹² As such, the creative force emerging out of friendship relations and the resolve to engage in a shared project is not merely stabilizing, it is empowering. The process of ‘world building’ expresses Arendt’s aforementioned reading of power as the ability “to act in concert” and to achieve/produce something together (Arendt 1970: 44; Chiba 1995: 523). In other words, the power at work here is *productive* (power-to) rather than coercive (power-over). The phenomenon of empowerment is in the creative potential of the ‘in-between’, it is an emerging property generated through social exchange (Blau 1964).

⁹ Berenskoetter 2007a; 2008. Thus, friendships understood as voluntary relationships of *choice* do not simply form on the basis of geographic proximity, close trade links or an otherwise high level of ‘interaction’. Nor do religious outlooks or similar political systems provide sufficient ground for friendship bonds. While both of the latter designate broad ideas of order embedded in histories and visions for the good life, they are too broad to satisfy the desire for authenticity and capture the particularity of friendship.

¹⁰ On resonance, see Marcussen et al. (1999); Checkel (1999); Payne (2001); Wiener (2004).

¹¹ Here I differ from Kahane (1999); who only emphasizes the importance of a shared history.

¹² On friendship’s impact on identity, see Allan (1989: 59ff); Pahl (2000: 68f); Giddens (1991: 87-98).

The productive (or creative) effect of friendship can be witnessed in two ways. The first is learning. As captured in the notion of friendship contributing to moral growth, in the process of shared world building friendship does not merely strengthen the Self but transforms it as well (Friedman 1993: 195-202; Allan 1989). As noted earlier, national biographies cannot ever become identical. The creative potential of friendship is drawn from the unique experiences and expectations held by the parties which enable them to exchange views and provide each other with slightly different perspectives, thereby stimulating the learning process. As Marilyn Friedman notes,

“the experiences, projects, and dreams of our friends can frame for us new standpoints from which we can experience the significance and worth of moral values and standards. In friendship, our commitment to our friends, as such, afford us access to whole ranges of experience beyond our own” (Friedman 1993: 197).

This learning process requires that friends are willing to share concerns and to listen, that they are open for learning and moral growth. It is also here, in the provision of satisfying desires for belonging/recognition and in mutually providing stimuli and energy for common projects where friends relate as equals and contribute on a unique logic of reciprocity (see below). Empowerment understood as a transformative process implies that friends must not only “respect and take an interest in one another’s perspectives” (Friedman 1993: 189) but are also willing to adapt and recognize the productive benefits arising from doing so. For states conceived as national biographies this implies the willingness to adapt domestic orders and the narratives which uphold them, which echoes James Rosenau’s notion of states as “adaptive entities” constantly changing in response to stimuli from “salient environments” (Rosenau 1981). To be sure, this does not rule out the possibility that disagreements arise over how to read ‘the world’, what matters is that compromises are made not in response to coercion but voluntarily, arrived at through deliberations characterized by respect for occasional divergence of views and the willingness for mutual understanding, solidarity and, again, learning (Risse-Kappen 1995). The productive power of friendship, then, lies in the fact that friendship does not fall into place but is an investment, a political project.

A second mechanism of mutual empowerment is solidarity/reciprocity among friends. Solidarity can be generally understood as an expression of support, helping someone else in times of need and, as such, is more than voicing support. Without downplaying the symbolic importance of the rhetorical gesture, the practical contribution which substantiates the commitment is arguably of greater relevance (in particular if solidarity is expressed in the realm of security policy). The notion of friendship as a dynamic process and a ‘shared life’ (Sherman; Gadamer) suggests that it is not very useful to conceive of solidarity as a singular or isolated act. Expressions of solidarity and the commitment to cooperation they entail rarely come with a time-limit attached, yet that does not mean they are valid indefinitely. I suggest that what maintains solidarity over time is that the act is recognisably valued by the recipient and not perceived as exploitation by the one who provides the support. The two come together in understanding practices of solidarity not as acts of altruism but as a phenomenon of social exchange marked by a dynamic of reciprocity. And in the relational reading of friendship, the act of support is understood to benefit not merely the friend but the common project. Simply put, supporting the friend also is an act of (indirect) self-empowerment.

As such, reciprocity in friendship does not follow a ‘tit-for-tat’ logic and cannot be seen in terms of an instrumental or utilitarian notion of exchange (Hutter 1978: 3; Pahl 2000: 55; Blum 1993; Jollimore, 2001). While in IR conceptual attention has mainly come from scholars employing utilitarian, useful pointers are provided by Robert Keohane, who defines reciprocity as “exchanges of roughly equivalent values” (Keohane 1986: 8). This echoes the Anthropological literature on social exchange which explores the social dynamics generated by gifts and expectations of adequate ‘return’ and, hence, debt. Whereas utilitarian approaches try to press these parameters into a universal scheme, this literature holds that dynamics of social exchange do not follow a universal logic and cannot be understood out of context (Adloff and Mau 2005).¹³ This resonates with Aristotle’s understanding of true friendship as based on reciprocated goodwill (NE, Book VIII, 2 and 8; Smith-Pangle, 2003: 142ff). His discussion makes clear that notions of value, return and debt are difficult to assess

¹³ Keohane recognises this by adding the ‘rough’ qualifier to highlight that it is very difficult to establish what counts for ‘equal value’ in terms of both benefits and concessions (Keohane 1986: 7).

within friendship, although he does not suggest that they are irrelevant. Aristotle notes that we should return what we owe and that friendships between those in formally unequal positions (see below) have to give proportionally. Yet, he argues that “friendship seeks what is possible, not what accords with worth” (NE, Book VIII, 14). He is clear that for friends who give services because of the friend there really can be no expectations about what is an appropriate return. This does not mean that no return is expected but that “it is enough ... to do what we can” (NE Book XI, 1). This not only means that the value of services exchanged is unique to their relationship and cannot be objectively fixed; it also suggests that the notion of ‘debt’ is quite problematic and difficult to uphold among friends. It is part of the mutual support in striving for the good life and also expressed in the seemingly altruistic phenomenon that friends ‘wish good to each other for each other’s own sake” (NE Book VIII, 3). Thus, we can say that friendship operates on a unique logic of reciprocity, where a commitment to ‘world building’ among friends entails a commitment towards ‘burden sharing’ yet does not rest on a quantifiable division of labour.¹⁴

Mutual learning and solidarity/reciprocity, then, are central to the process of shared world building. They are mechanisms which sustain friendship and carry it forward; as such they are mechanisms of productive power. What remains is to outline further effects of the empowerment process, that is, how they compromise or generate other phenomena of ‘power’ found internally and externally to friendship. The remainder of this paper will briefly outline two power phenomena within each dimension: Internally, friendship has the capacity to level out hierarchy, but it also generates vulnerability and significant ‘power over’ potential. Externally, it can both undercut international order (and exclude others) and create international order (and invite others).

¹⁴ Keohane also differentiates between specific and diffuse reciprocity, with the former understood as a “situation in which specified partners exchange items of equivalent value in a strictly delimited sequence”, such as a bargaining process. The latter (diffuse reciprocity) does not involve direct or clearly delineated exchange but merely acting in accordance with “generally accepted standards of behaviour” within a group and, as such, is more about acting out of obligation and may not even involve exchange (in the strict sense of the term) (Keohane 1986: 4). While Keohane’s passing note that “close friends practise diffuse reciprocity” fits the understanding of friends committed to building international order, the notion of friendship as an intimate relationship makes reciprocity quite specific.

Internal Dimension

Perhaps the most significant effect of friendship is that it is levels hierarchy. Most obviously, in the understanding of the friend as ‘another Self’, the friend cannot be conceived of as inferior or superior. As Aristotle suggests, formal inequality can be compensated through similarity in virtue (a sense of what is ‘right’), a view echoed by most scholars of friendship who consider friendship the one thing which can transcend otherwise divisive hierarchies.¹⁵ In the conceptual terminology of this paper, in their role as joint investors into the shared project, as contributors to the shared good life and generators of a stable sense of Self, friends regard each other as equal. This equality does not refer to a ‘right’ that can be claimed but to an unspoken recognition that the choices and judgments are made from the ‘same’ baseline and for the same aspirations (building an international order). This sense of equality levels inequalities in material resources or formal institutional standing. As such, mutual recognition as an equal is thus not only a core feature of mutually empowering relationship, it also compromises more traditionally understood relations of (material) power and authority. Although here it is worth noting that Aristotle emphasizes that there are different kinds of inequality and suggests that each “must make the return that is proportionate to the types of superiority” (NE, Book VIII, 13), and at one point suggesting that “the superior should get more honour, and the needy person more profit” (NE, Book VIII, 14).

Yet bonds of friendship also inversely create a relationship of interdependence: by empowering each other in pursuing a project which entwines their national biographies, friends also come to depend on each other for sustaining the same. Said differently, the social capital contained in friendship, namely the ability to provide stability by mutually satisfying desires of belonging/recognition and authenticity, turns into a soft-power relationship in which interdependence exposes its flip side, namely vulnerability.¹⁶ In the process of developing ideas of order / a shared a moral space together, friends create an intimacy which generates great vulnerability. The trust that friends will continue to invest in the common project and, thereby, will

¹⁵ NE, Book VIII, 7 and 11. See also Hutter (1978); Kutcher (2000). For a view that Aristotle does not provide a convincing account for ‘true friendship’ across hierarchies; see Smith Pangle (2003: 101f).

¹⁶ This duality inherent in relationships of interdependence is discussed for the economic realm by Keohane and Nye (1989).

continue making the world meaningful for each other, makes the friend powerful. Indeed, because no-one is as vital to the biographical narrative of the Self as the friend, no-one is as powerful to undermine it. As Horst Hutter puts it: “there is no one who is as vulnerable to the actions of Self as a friend (...) no power is as total as the power one has over friends” (Hutter, 1978: 12).

This vulnerability may become a factor when there is dissonance among friends, that is, when suddenly there are diverging views over what makes an appropriate contribution to the shared project. Here, as well, Aristotle offers some pointers. Alongside his aforementioned suggestion that friendship can transcend hierarchy, Aristotle also argues that true friendship between ruler and ruled is difficult, if not impossible, and that the emergence of significant and gaps in wealth is likely to corrupt the logic of reciprocity among friends by generating unequal expectations (NE, Book VIII, 7 and 14). The fact that Aristotle highlights this suggests that views on what makes for an adequate return/contribution among formally unequal friends holds a potential source of tension, in particular when the gap is widening (or narrowing). Indeed, Aristotle warns that significant *shifts* in formal status and resources/assets available changes conceptions of what/how much can be contributed, which in turn may lead to a corruption of reciprocity (NE, Book VIII, 14). In that case, we may witness the emergence of power over phenomenon where friends (perhaps unintentionally) coerce each other into adapting through the application of what Bially Mattern (2005) calls “representational force”.

External Dimension

In contrast to philosophers (Hutter 1976) and early sociologists like Simmel (1950: 126), sociologists long assumed that the intimate character of friendship had no broader consequence for society. However, they changed their mind (Allan 1989, 1998). By providing a source for self-confidence, moral certainty and direction for common projects, friendships are capable of carrying and undermining/transforming order. The ‘external’ effects of friendship become apparent once one takes into account that the world-building process does not take place in a social vacuum. After all, the world built by friends is not *that* intimate, which is to say that the ‘in-between’ in friendship relations is not an exclusive space. Specifically, friends can be seen as affecting international order in two ways.

The first arises out of the fact that exclusivity means friends apply a double standard. The sense of equality outlined above is of a special kind, and as captured in the notion of a *unique* logic of reciprocity, friends do not support each other necessarily in line with formal/universal rules and regulations. When making investment and support or applying in applying a certain ‘logic of appropriateness’, friends privilege each other over others and in that sense, undercut any (international) order postulating neutrality. Thus, the agenda pursued by friends also weighs in interaction with third parties and is likely to affect them. The application of a double standard may not merely exclude ‘third parties’ from decisions and leave them in the dark about the ‘real’ reasons for doing X or Y,¹⁷ the decisions taken may be very well directed against third parties.

Yet, second, the creative potential within friendship may also come to benefit others. Said differently, while friendship (as understood here) is marked by intimacy, the international order friends seek to build does not need to be ‘closed’ to others or detrimental to their interests/identities. It may be negotiated in an international institution signifying an open/invited political space (Gaventa 2007). Indeed, while there is no doubt that friends interact informally and ‘privately’, it can be argued that they make extensive use of international institutions to negotiate, administer, and manifest the common project.¹⁸ They are vehicles for shared ‘world building’ which may attract and get support from others. In that sense, institutions can be used by friends not merely for conservative/instrumental reasons but also to potentially include others into the project and win them over as friends. To be sure, this does not mean that a friendship lens should adopt the view popular among constructivists emphasizing the socializing power of institutions. Rather, institutions only possess what John Ruggie (1998: 62) calls “transordinate authority”, that is, their relevance is dependent on the vitality of the friendship negotiated through them.

¹⁷ As Goffman puts it “the self that is revealed in our dealings with our friends is closer to our self definition than the ‘self’ we portray in other contexts...friends are permitted ‘backstage’ more than most” (in Allan 1989: 59).

¹⁸ For a discussion of institutions as structures of empowerment, see Ringmar (2007).