

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FRIENDSHIP IN IRAQI POLITICAL THEORY

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY FROM MYTHOLOGY TO THEOCRACY

I would like in this paper to shed light on the politics of friendship that is foremost in our minds and thinking, and thus forced us to postulate and mobilize the most important views in the world.

First of all I will interpret why friendship is considered one of the most important issues in modern philosophy, particularly in Islamic thought, and what its repercussions on political action. There is no exaggeration in saying that both in the past and the present, and maybe in the future, the idea of friendship is highly influential, simply because political awareness is grounded in a policy of friendship.

Our concept of friendship takes us to three main significant areas that need to be reconsidered These will be examined from the mythical point of view of the epic of Gilgamesh. The first is Rivals Friendship which is established on the basis of an equality among the available resources between two members, according to a coalition concept whether from a common side interest or to ensure a nonhostile environment at the least This is exemplified in a story told by Abo Heian Al Tawhidi which will be discussed later in this paper⁽¹⁾. This kind of friendship works as a strategy between the powerful

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members who understand the game of friendship on the same level of harmony. As in the case of the relation between Gilgamesh and Ankido which also will be clarified later in this study. It is featured by its scarcity and long duration, the strength of its ties, its long duration of influence and flexibility, the ability to self-update, and its ability to adapt and deal with crisis and to overcome them. It can start as a hostile relationship (starting from a rival competition concept) and does not stop there but changes into interdependent strategy. It is a kind of understanding between the wise and intellectual, and if we are allowed to compare the two parts of a Rivals' friendship, it can resemble a Siamese twin, who during the process of separation, may die as a result.

The second type is the Emotional/Romantic Friendship; I call it that because it is established on a base of an admiration and appreciation of emotions from a member that is less efficient in the available resources than the first efficient member. What happens in this type is the same thing that happens between a hard working student and a talented teacher. The first person needs to interfere and communicate with the powerful person to achieve perfection. This type of friendship is common and usually built on interest (that may or may not be mutual). This type does

not possess the ability to renew itself and can spring from flatter techniques. This type of friendship is destined to fail because it is established without a coalition between the members but on a narrow interest for the benefit of the first powerful member. If we use a biological metaphor we can describe it as an infant which is born dead.

The third type is the Conditional Friendship. It starts from the powerful part to the weaker one, or the one with less efficient abilities. This friendship usually derives its existence from the virtues of religions, and was justified under the compassion titles or the acceptance of the other following the conditions of those who are powerful. It is a favor from the powerful to the weak who do not form a real danger or a threat to any of the powerful abilities. This type is featured by its being controlled under domination and with no anticipated future. It is also a deformed being, which cannot be identified with and influence or attitude. It can be compared to Amoeba from biological point of view, a single cell organism not independent but only a biological being with a short life.

Aristotle assumed a friend is best demonstrated in the man's attitude of himself. This led him to propose the notion of the friend as another self.

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The Amoeba's short life is ended by the lacks of communication as much as this type of friendship lack communication between its members.

The idea of friendship is found in Western thought, beginning with Aristotle as a theory, and had been enrolled within a philosophical framework. It seems so obvious when the ambiguous statement attributed to Aristotle: "My friends, there are no friends!" which both Diogenes Lortez and the 16th century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne claimed (1). Since Aristotle assumed a friend is best demonstrated in the man's attitude of himself. This led him to propose the notion of the friend as another self. Derrida interpreted this theme in his book, *The Politics of Friendship* by an analogy between friendship and politics within the fraternity and congeneric connection (2).

In the Middle East, however, it seems that things are different. The first difference is that friendship may arise from hostility; these

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words do not seem to be less contradicting than the aforementioned statement. The most important question here is why hostility?, or how is friendship generated from the womb of hostility?

The first and most important answer comes from the Epic of Gilgamesh²:

" He who has seen everything, I well make known ... to the lands.
I will teach ... about him how experienced all things, alike.
Anu granted him totality of knowledge of all.
He saw the Secret, discovered the Hidden.
He brought information of the Time before the Flood". (3)

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" There is no rival who can raise a weapon against him.
His fellows stand at the alert attentive to his orders!
Gilgamesh does not leave a son to his father. Day and night he arrogantly....
Is he the shepherd of Uruk-Haven,
Is he their shepherd

Bold, eminent, knowing and wise.
Gilgamesh does not leave a girl to her mother!
The daughter of warrior, the bride of the young man,
Anu listened to their complaint " (4)

No great offers needed, according to these verses, to discover that Gilgamesh

was a dictator, an arrogant king. Obviously he persecuted the people of Uruk. Hegel probably was deriving from this epic when he said that the governor in the east is always a despotic king like their Gods. Despite the beauty of Gilgamesh, the rule of tyranny is no longer accepted by his people. People in Uruk were fed up with Gilgamesh's actions, and were complaining about his bravado to Anu. The God Anu wisely decided to punish Gilgamesh. by making him take up a friendship as his punishment, since he is not just an ordinary human being. If we understand the way Gods think, we will realize why Anu was a genius when he created a competent friend for Gilgamesh...which was also supposed to be his punishment as well.

How do the Gods punish a dictator? The answer may be, with love Gods understand each other. Jesus once said that love saves human, doesn't it? (Or didn't he?)

But what kind of love did the gods give to tyrants?

Anu listened to their complaints, and (the gods) called out to Aruru: it was you, Aruru, who created mankind(?), now create a zikru to it/him. Let him be equal to his (Gilgamesh's) stormy heart, let them be a match for each other so that Uruk may find peace!

When Aruru heard this she created within herself the zikru of Anu.⁽⁵⁾

Since Gilgamesh was a hero and not an ordinary man, he had privileges that were not

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available to other common people. He was allowed to do things other people could not do. He has the right to take life or spare it for whoever he wants, and the right to have sexual intercourse with any woman he likes. He doesn't leave a son to his father, and a virgin daughter to her mother. He was handsome, and his beauty gave him power for he was the protector of Uruk. The hero perhaps won't be a real hero until the gods give him the right to kill. We remember Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov the protagonist of *Crime and Punishment*. Though he committed murder, he stopped being a hero when he consciously felt guilty and surrendered at the end of the novel. He is a hero who surrendered his heroism; he could not stand his role as a hero till the end. Napoleon Bonaparte's heroism gave him the right to conquer Europe, and Hitler too as killers, and since they are not ordinary heroes, they are not ordinary killers. The same thing is applicable to Saddam Hussein and any other modern world tyrant. The common thing

among them is that they are left alone at the end. Whereas Gilgamesh realized that the Gods punished him when they sent Ankido and then his soul, here the ghost of suffering in Gilgamesh's soul was awake and he stopped being a hero. Perhaps the Gods wanted to take the spirit of heroism from Gilgamesh when they took his friend's soul.

Aruru washed her hands, she pinched off some clay, and threw it into the wilderness.

In the wilderness, she created valiant Enkidu, born of Silence, endowed with strength by Ninurta. His whole body was shaggy with hair, he had a full head of hair like a woman, his locks billowed in profusion like Ashnan. He knew neither people nor settled living, but wore a garment like Sumukan." He ate grasses with the gazelles, and jostled at the watering hole with the animals; as with animals, his thirst was slaked with (mere) water.⁽⁶⁾

.....

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, saying:

Come on, my friend, let us go to the Egalmah Temple,
to Ninsun, the Great Queen;
Ninsun is wise, all-knowing.
She will put the advisable path at our feet."
Taking each other by the hand,
Gilgamesh and Enkidu walked to the Egalmah ("Great Palace"),
to Ninsun, the Great Queen.
Gilgamesh arose and went to her.⁽⁷⁾

Based on the foregoing, we understand Nietzsche's need for Wagner, his lost friend,

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and the Arabic poet Al Mutanabi's pain when he unwillingly had to leave the court of Saif Al Dawlah Al Hamadani.⁴ Here the Communist Manifesto, which was written by the friends 'Marx and Engels', should not be forgotten, and Sartre and Simon de Beauvoir relationship, though that one can be distinguished by eroticism. Going back to Gilgamesh, his friendship which originated from a dream, where he saw a vision in his sleep of a new battle in which his enemy (perhaps the only enemy he didn't kill) was changed to a friend, eventually leading to a change in his tyranny, and opening the way for divine punishment. Adam too dreamed of Eve and then got her in reality and then loved her. God punished him with this love, by his expulsion from heaven to misery. Heaven was not the reason for his misery, but to be deprived of Eve. Gilgamesh was not suffering because of the idea of death but rather from the end of his friendship. Divine love seems to work in two dimensions, one as a reward and the other as punishment.

"My friend, the swift mule, fleet wild ass of the mountain,
panther of the wilderness,

Enkidu, my friend, the swift mule, fleet
wild ass of the mountain,
panther of the wilderness,
after we joined together and went up into
the mountain,
fought the Bull of Heaven and killed it,

and overwhelmed Humbaba, who lived in
the Cedar Forest,
now what is this sleep which has seized
you?

You have turned dark and do not hear
me!"

But his (Enkidu's) eyes do not move,"⁽⁸⁾

The Role of Women as a Key Player in The Equation of Friendship:

Women appear in the Epic of Gilgamesh whenever the story reaches an impasse. A woman is the solution and the problem at the same time. She ties all the events. She is the appearance and disappearance portability. The appearance is not without her charm, so as her disappearance. She is the mystery and the key to solve the human problematic issues. She is the link between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and their secret separation. Women appear three important times in the

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epic. The First erotic appearance of women is with Shamhat, who is Uruk 's great prostitute. According to the epic, her mission will be to seduce Enkidu. Here, obviously she exercises an act of communication between the two civilizations (nature and culture) through the erotic concepts. Woman's body is a road map for understanding and to have a friendship. This function may still exist so far, unfortunately (or maybe not!). The story of the historic friendship began between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, between wilderness and civilization.

That is he, Shamhat! Release your clenched arms; expose your sex so he can take in your voluptuousness. Do not be restrained--take his energy! When he sees you he will draw near to you. Spread out your robe so he can lie upon you, and perform for this primitive the task of womankind! His animals, who grew up in his wilderness, will become alien to him, and his lust will groan over you.⁽⁹⁾

The second appearance is the mother of Gilgamesh. She is wise, and all-knowing, since she was a Female God (Rimat-Ninsun), according to a sacred prostitution system. Due to her position she was the link between the gods and Gilgamesh to promote friendship. She was a reference to the beginning of the idea of friendship, and she was blessed as a divine new phase of the strategic alliance between the two heroes Uruk:

There will come to you a mighty man, a comrade who saves his friend-- he is the

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mightiest in the land, he is strongest, his strength is mighty as the meteorite (!) of Anu! You loved him and embraced him as a wife; and it is he who will repeatedly save you. Your dream is good and propitious! ⁽¹⁰⁾

The third apparition is of Princess Ishtar, the princess of desire and revenge. She is a covetous woman who raised her eyes to the beauty of Gilgamesh. She is a ghostly woman who defied great friendship that was destroyed with Enkidu's death, which was caused by her. She is the woman who ended everything, as she was able to start it.

"When Ishtar heard this, in a fury she went up to the heavens,
going to Anu, her father, and crying,
going to Anrum, her mother, and weeping:
"Father, Gilgamesh has insulted me over and over.....
the one of them who pulled up the Cedar of the Mountain
must die!
Enlil said:'Let Enkidu die, but Gilgamesh must not die!' ⁽¹¹⁾

A woman, according to the mythological mind, should not be part of a friendship; she is dedicated to love only through the active erotic atmosphere she can offer. She controls the game, the friendship game. She is the

Shamhat exercises an act of communication between the two civilizations (nature and culture) through the erotic concepts.

static main operator. She is the means of communication that can start a friendship and flourish it. She can also be the fundamental reason to end it. Since she is the dynamic movement that conducts the policy of friendship, she does not fit in it. Friendship is for rivals and women are for love. We noticed that even for the primitive folks when women were material of peace between conflicting tribes. The system of communication and exchanging was conducted through an offering of a woman to establish relativeness with the rivaling tribe. Through this peace and family relation is built. The same thing was done by Uruk's prostitutes. They were the communication link between the members of the friendship that is between Gilgamesh and Ankido which ended the hostility of Gilgamesh. I do not believe that things have changed a lot; to a recent time and even currently European Kings marry their daughters 'Princesses' to men from rival countries to achieve understanding and peace between the two countries. Hence the hostility is changed to a coalition by virtue of a woman's ability. By the same token a woman can destroy a family relation system and vice versa, as Ishtar did. There are ancient Arabic stories about severe wars between families because of a woman called (Al Basus) which continued for 40 years.

Due to Gilgamesh 's mother position , as a Female god, she was the link between the gods and Gilgamesh to promote friendship.

Accordingly, the erotic has a ghostly energy as Derrida put it, for establishment, destruction, formation and hiding.

The ghostly image of a woman is represented today in the media through the image of woman as an entertainment erotic object. The function of the ghostly space exposes women as a continuous seduction to achieve a relation or a deal of a consumed friendship. It is a market friendship where woman is positioned for marketing purposes of promotion, profit and entertainment. Since a woman has the ability of ghostly action between establishment and destruction, between Apollo and Dionysius and between Hamlet's theological 'to be or not to be', she is able to controlling the political game (economically) and controls its resources. That is because those in control of this political game could not realize the ghostly ability of the image of woman and its incitation dimensions which possess the ability of the preference of one of the parts to win. The woman herself who is formed in the ghostly space as an erotic

ghost, can crystallize the idea of a revolution; why not sine Joan of Arc (*French: Jeanne d'Arc*) image is still present in our minds as a ghostly figure in her political, religious and revolutionary uniform.

The political concept of friendship in Islam:

The concept of friendship played a genuine role in Islamic thought, and appeared to divide Muslims after the death of prophet Mohammad into Sunis and Shi'a, depending on the prophet instructions with his friends in his life time to which he referred to as a policy of Containment, saying: 'My friends are like stars in the desert, whoever you chose you follow their way'. Dozens of sayings from the prophet are recorded talking about their virtues like:

1. Abu Bakr except from all Prophets is supreme in all human beings. (Tibrani⁵).
2. the most merciful on my Ummah, in my Ummah, is Abu Bakr. (Tirimzi).
3. Oh Abu Bakr!, you will be my companion on the pond of Heaven as you were also my companion in the cave. (Tirimzi⁶).
4. Tell Abu Bakr from my side to offer Salat to people (Muslims). [In absence of

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Prophet Muhammad (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirimzi, Ibn-e-Majah)

5. I don't know uphill when I remain with you, so follow the ones (who will become Caliphs) after me. [Prophet Muhammad pointed towards Abu Bakr and Umar]. And follow the way of Ammar and the words that Abdullah bin Masood tell you, verify it. (Tirimzi). On the other side there are a lot of saying by the prophet praising the virtues of his family:

“Ana wa Aliyyin min Noorin Wahid” (Myself and Ali are from one Light). Al-Mas’udi in his Muruju ‘dh-dhahab quotes a long hadith of The Prophet to the effect that when Allah (God) had created, first of all, The Light of Muhammad, He addressed him thus, “You are my chosen one and Trustee of My Light and Guidance. It is because of you that I am going to create the earth and the heavens, lay down reward and punishment, and bring into being the Garden and the Fire”. The tradition then goes on to speak about the Family of The Prophet, creation of the angels, of the souls, of the world, of the covenant taken from the souls about belief in One God and the prophethood of Muhammad. This is why Ibn Abbas is cited in Al-Tabarani’s Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir and Al-Khasai’s Al-Kubra quoting The Prophet saying; “I was Prophet when Adam

was between the soul and the body (i.e. when Adam’s creation was in its initial stages)”.

The prophet's praise to one of his family members and friends has a special respect in Muslims hearts and holds a special place that should be respected. The respect in turn reveals a political position, for the prophet himself and for the one who should follow in the leading position after him. Eventually Muslims witnessed a hard time after the death of the prophet regarding the question who should be the prophet’s successor (Calipha)⁷. The Suni Muslims believe that the results of the meeting held after the death of the prophet in a place called ‘Al Sakifa’ were valid⁸. The result of that meeting was the choice of Abo Baker (Mohammad’s close friend) as the Calipha of Muslims after Mohammad as an obligatory decision. While the Shi’a Muslims did not approve and their disapproval was based on a previous speech by the Prophet given in a place called ‘Al Ghadeer’ (water brook near Macca) which included according to the Shi’a believes, a clear reference of the nomination of Ali Bin Abi Talib (Mohammad Cousin and life companion) as the successor in case of

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Mohammad's death. The Sunni gives priority in power succession to Mohammad's closest friends (Abo Baker, Omar Bin Al Khattab, Othman Bin Affan and then Ali Bin Abi Talib). While the Shi'a give priority of the ruling power to Mohammad's family exclusively: Ali Bin Abi Talib, Al Hassan Bin Ali and Al Hussein Bin Ali (the sons of Fatima the only daughter of Mohammad).

There is an important book written by the famous philosopher Al Tawhidi entitled, *Friendship & The Friend*, which gives an account of hundreds of sayings of the prophet praising the virtues of his friends, both Suni and Shi'a leaders. What is interesting is that those leaders of the Suni part mention the virtues of friendship, while the Shi'a mention the virtues of brotherhood! that means that the conflict originally is a political conflict, undercovered by a philosophical ideology.

The Suni Muslims established a discussion between close friends of the prophet to decide the nomination of the ruler, while the Shi'ats

Muslims believed in the divine nomination of the prophet's family. This conflict goes very far back in the history of Islam today, but its influences are still clear and have consequences right up to this moment, with the addition of modern updates which are established in the political and theocratic theory of Islam, such as:

1. The Caliphate theory (Sunni): the Omayyad and Abbasids are the first to establish an Islamic Arabic Empire followed by the Ottoman Empire built on the same basis in addition to a few adjustments to adapt to the developing communities because they are not an Arab.
2. Though the Shi'a (believers of the Imam rule) did not object all the time to the rule of the Suni Caliphate (Omayyad, Abbasids and Ottomans) but they on a few occasions were able to develop a political theory for themselves to get rid of this problem. They believed in the rule of the 12 Imams (family successors of Mohamads' daughter's sons) and the last one Al Mahdi (The Absent Imam).

They were able to get rid of the nomination problem⁹ considering the Faqih (jurist law), the spiritual ruler or the sect guide is the one

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that should look after peoples' welfare till the appearance of the Absent Imam Al Mahdi who is the genuine ruler at the end of times. It is important here to refer to the relation between Al Mahdi and his delegates, which is not a relation of friendship like that of the prophet and his companions but a relation that is similar to a great extent to that of Jesus Christ with his disciples. Here it is necessary to refer to the similarity between the two stories, Christ's and Al Mahdi Stories.

Religions in general do not approve of political friendship, except in limited borders that are related flexible treatments between its members as part of good morals, which assume a non-equal companion- friendship between the followers and the leaders. From a political point of view religions believe in followers, and the believer should blindly follow the instructions without argument or complaint. Religious thinking does not comprehend rivalry or conversation; it believes in the idea of revelation and enlightenment. The believer

The result of that meeting was the choice of Abu Baker (Mohammad's close friend) as the Calipha of Muslims after Mohammad as an obligatory decision.

should obey the instructions to be close to the enlightening source, otherwise he/she would stay in the darkness. In the same way, the friends of the prophet are the closest people to the enlightened (Noor), so as his family.

Back to Gilgamesh: we can find him in the epic realizing the concept of friendship when he philosophized and continued searching for its meaning and the concepts of fate, immortality, and good deeds. He could not realize that when he was a half God king, but only when he got near to his inner humanity and close to death, mortality and reason. He could realize the depth of friendship policies (rivals friendship), and on this basis we can simply conclude that philosophical thought is the only perfect road to understanding the dimensions of friendship and its policies, knowledge and research; not religions and their logic which is based on a duality of Master and follower (which makes it impossible to make the master a friend to his follower), nor politics (in its narrow meaning) because it is based on the duality of winner and loser, of the powerful and weak, according to the aforementioned third type of friendship (the conditional friendship).

Notes

- 1-Bradley Bryan, Approaching other : Aristotle on Friendship 's possibility. political theory. vol37. no 6 (December2009) pp 754779-.
- 2-Sandra Lynch, Aristotle and Derrida on friendship. contremeps 3. July 2002 pp 98.
- 3-The Epic of Gilgamesh. translated by Maureen Gallery Kovaces, Electronic Edition by Wolf Carnahan, compared with the Arabic translation: Tablet (ملحمة) : طه باقر
- 4-Ibid Tablet I.
- 5-Ibid Tablet I.
- 6-Ibid Tablet I.
- 7-Ibid Tablet I and III.
- 8-Ibid Tablet VIII.
- 9-Ibid tablet I.
- 10-Ibid tablet I.
- 11- Ibid tablet VI.

Footnote

- * Jasim Bdaiwi Wadi is a visiting professor in California state University. He taught the Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Baghdad. College of Arts. Among his publications *Political Thinking in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida* (2011).
- 1 Al-Tawhidi was an Arabic litterateur and philosopher, probably of Persian origin, and the author of numerous books which reflect all the main themes of debate and reflection in the cultivated circles of his time. His basic outlook could be defined as a kind of simplified and vulgarized Neoplatonism, influenced by Gnostic elements, with four hypostases: God, Intellect, Soul and Nature. He also has a strong interest in moral questions on both the individual and social level.
 - 2 The Epic of Gilgamesh is, perhaps, the oldest written story on Earth. It comes to us from Ancient Sumeria, and was originally written on 12 clay tablets in cuniefom script. It is about the adventures of the historical King of Uruk (somewhere between 2750 and 2500 BCE).
 - 3 Uruk (**Sumerian**: unug; **Akkadian**: **uruk**, Biblical Hebrew: Erech, **Greek**: Ορχόη, Ορρύγεια Orchoē, Ōrugaia; modern Arabic وركاء Warkā') was an ancient **city** of Sumer and later **Babylonia**, situated east of the present bed of the Euphrates river, on the ancient dry former channel of the Euphrates River.
 - 4 He was the ruler of northern Syria who was the founder and the most prominent prince of the Arab Hamdanid

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- dynasty of Aleppo. He was famous for his patronage of scholars and poets and for his military struggles against the Greeks
- 5 Abu al-Qasim Sulaiman ibn Ahmad ibn Al-Tabarani was born sometime in 260 AH (873 CE) and lived until 360 AH (970 CE). He narrated numerous ahadīth
 - 6 أبو عيسى محمد بن عيسى السلمي الضرير البوغي الترمذي ; Persian : ترمذی, Termezī; 824 – 8 October 892), often referred to as Imam at-Tirmidhi, was a Persian Islamic scholar and collector of hadith who wrote al-Jami` as-Sahih(known as Jami` at-Tirmidhi), one of the six canonical hadith compilations in Sunni Islam. He also wrote Shama'il Muhammadiyah (popularly known as Shama'il at-Tirmidhi), a compilation of hadiths concerning the person and character of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. At-Tirmidhi was also well versed in Arabic grammar, favoring the school of Kufa over Basra due to the former's preservation of Arabic poetry as a primary source.
 - 7 The chief Muslim civil and religious ruler, regarded as the successor of Muhammad.
 - 8 A sheltered big room used for important meetings and discussion regarding political and religious issues.
 - 9 The Shi'at Muslims believed that the prophet should nominate the person who *should follow him as the Muslims' Caliphat*.

