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The Politics and Ethics of Friendship in the Ethics Class

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for the Degree of Master of Education in the Teaching of Ethics in Schools

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Abstract

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Friendship is regarded to be an essential element of living a good life. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1983) reflects on the elements that make friendship a reliable and long-lasting relationship. His thoughts on friendship are considered authoritative sources that ground further discussion on friendship. Derrida recognises Aristotle's contribution to understanding friendship as a political source for democratic relations, however, he deconstructs his foundational thoughts by identifying and transcending its limits. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida (2005b) cracks open the nutshell of friendship to explore new ways that may be seen as "sheer madness" (p. 51) compared with traditional concepts that determine what and how friendship should be. Derrida's concept of *différance* opens a discussion about the enemy-friend aporia and directs attention to actual possible unconditional encounters with the altogether different other. Drawing on Derrida's thoughts, this study identifies key elements and issues related to friendship in the Ethics class and the teaching of Ethics in Maltese schools. Inspired by Derrida's radically new approach to friendship and his concept of lovence, this thesis considers encounters between students within the Ethics class and beyond as essential experiences to teaching Ethics. These encounters help Ethics students develop their ethical character to welcome others non-violently, as singular and unique rather than part of a unified community. This study also considers the possibilities that Derridean friendship presents to the Ethics community of friends, its implications on democratic life and the pedagogical relevance of the teacher becoming a friend to the teaching of Ethics.

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FRIENDSHIP – ETHICS – DECONSTRUCTION

DEMOCRACY – ENCOUNTERS – APORIA

Dedication

To my beloved mother and the memory of my late father

for the love, support and guidance

that helped me to become the person I am today.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Dedication iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

Abbreviations viii

Introduction 1

Chapter I 4

1 Deconstructing the Classical Concept of Friendship 4

1.1 The Classical Concept of Friendship 5

1.1.1 Love 6

1.1.2 Reciprocity 7

1.1.3 The Other Self 8

1.1.4 Calculation 9

1.1.5 The Political Dimension 10

1.1.6 Brotherhood 10

1.2 The Political Turn of Derridean Friendship 11

1.3 Deconstruction 13

1.3.1 Democracy 15

1.3.2 Equality and Freedom 16

1.3.3 Fraternity 17

1.4 Rethinking Friendship beyond Brotherhood 19

1.5 The Aporia of Friendship 20

1.6 Conclusion 24

Chapter II 25

2 Towards a New Experience of Friendship 25

2.1 Friendship to come 26

2.2 Democracy to come 27
2.3 Aimance 28
2.4 Conditions of Possibility for Friendship 30
2.4.1 The Irreducible Other 30
2.4.2 Hospitality 32
2.4.3 Responsibility and Freedom 34
2.5 Conclusion 37
Chapter III 39
3 Friendship in the Ethics Curriculum 39
3.1 Ethics Education in Schools 40
3.1.1 The Introduction of Ethics in Schools 40
3.1.2 Pedagogy 41
3.1.3 The Programme and Assessment of Ethics Curriculum 43
3.2 The Friendship supported in the Ethics Class 46
3.2.1 A Definite Concept of Friendship 47
3.2.2 Love 49
3.2.3 Brotherhood 50
3.2.4 Commonality 51
3.2.5 Virtue 54
3.2.6 The Other Self 54
3.2.7 Reciprocity 55
3.3 Conclusion 56
Chapter IV 57
4 An Alternative Friendship by the Ethics Class 57
4.1 Lovence 58
4.2 Aneconomic Friendship 59
4.3 Greeting the Other 60

4.4 Responsive Responsibility 64
4.5 Questioning the Self at the Face of the Friend 66
4.6 A Friendship wounded with Auto-immunity 67
4.7 Towards a Democracy to come 68
4.8 Conclusion 69
Chapter V 71
5 Can Friendship be taught? 71
5.1 The Teacher as a Friend 73
5.1.1 A Responsible Friend 75
5.1.2 A Hospitable Friend 76
5.1.3 Is it worth the Risk? 78
5.2 Making Way for the Friendship to come 79
5.2.1 A Pedagogy of Interruption 79
5.2.2 Cultivating an Attitude of Hospitable Encounters 81
5.2.3 Responsibility 82
5.3 Conclusion 83
Conclusion 84
Bibliography 88

Abbreviations

CRE	Catholic Religious Education
EE	Ethics Education
NCF	National Curriculum Framework for All
NE	Nicomachean Ethics
P4C	Philosophy for Children
PF	The Politics of Friendship

Introduction

Aristotle (1983) states that friendship is “most necessary to our life… for no one would care to live without friends, though he had all other good things” (p. 251). My interest in academically exploring that which is considered essential for living a good life was always intriguing to me. I explored this topic during my studies for my undergraduate degree, so it was almost natural to keep on exploring the concept of friendship at a Masters level. After following philosophy lectures as part of the Post-Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Ethics, I became more captivated by philosophically inquiring into how friendship can throw light on the teaching and learning of Ethics. The moment I encountered Derrida’s ideas about friendship in *The Politics of Friendship* (2005b), I became more intrigued to delve deeper into his very particular deconstructive inquiry of this notion and to explore how teachers of Ethics can draw on his insights to enhance ethical relations within the class. I had already come across his thoughts about hospitality which enticed me into Derrida’s ideas of how friendship can be alternatively conceived and most importantly, lived.

Derrida’s thoughts are not easy to grasp and at times even considered insignificant to some, particularly to Anglo-American analytic philosophers such as Searle and Mellor (Salmon, 2020). The contestation against his nomination for an honorary doctorate by the University of Cambridge in 1992 marked the significant opposition to his thought and deconstructive methods (Tikkanen, 2020). His conceptual investigations, although aporetic and without closure, do not render Derrida a moral and epistemological relativist. While Derrida sustains that ethics cannot be absolute because there is no pure good or evil, he also maintains that there are actions that are to be universally condemned despite any personal opinion (Stocker, 2006). His work helps us in our ethical journey towards exploring taken for granted meanings of practices to continue in the quest for personal and communal prosperity. Even though Derrida’s method differs from the traditional way of philosophical conception of ethics, the themes of friendship, responsibility, hospitality, and communal living and his understanding of ethics and politics as the horizon that is yet to come, provide ethical considerations that enrich human life in relation to the strangeness of the other.

In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida deconstructs the concept of friendship to proliferate its meaning, making it more complex in highlighting its political consequences. He challenges meanings attributed to it in the course of history to help us explore what friendship can signify without committing himself to some definite closure that might prevent detours in our ethical journey. At the core of Derridean philosophy is the exploration and discovery of the hidden meanings (secrets) that are not yet revealed. The realisation of the condition of absence of absolute truth is what for him keeps friendship alive. Claiming a closure would not only lead to the death of a concept but also to our exploration of ways of living together.

This discussion opens with the questioning of the basic elements that surround Aristotle's conceptualisation of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Chapter I examines reciprocity, equality and sameness to highlight how friendship and the democratic life are limited by these elements. It also problematises brotherhood which encapsulates many of our political notions of friendship and the democratic life and questions if we can think of a friendship beyond these thresholds. Even more inspiring is Derrida's innovative approach that explores friendship in a close relationship with the enemy. This directs Chapter II to Derrida's ongoing exploration of an alternative practice of friendship and democracy that exceed our existing understandings. It discusses how the disposition of lovence can take us to unheard-of and unforeseen ways of living together.

Derrida's argumentation leads me to rethink the politics and ethics of friendship in the Ethics class in Maltese schools. Without destructing what is already present in the Ethics curriculum, Chapter III identifies and analyses existing elements of friendship to envision friendship that transcends the existing friendship relations within the Ethics class. Following this analysis, Chapter IV explores how the Ethics community can offer friendship beyond reciprocity and brotherhood. Is friendship with wholly different others possible? The most significant interruption to the Ethics class is the exploration of friendship that makes encounters with those considered enemies possible. It reflects on how the Ethics community of friends is to approach different others and the implications that such encounters bring to the Ethics

community. This incessant exploration of friendship helps students to rethink and envision a better way of living with different others. The readiness to offer friendship to others without any form of exchange and to respond non-violently towards the singular and irreplaceable other moves the Ethics class towards the democracy that is yet to come.

Since these reflections concern friendship within an education setup, Chapter V questions whether friendship can be taught in the Ethics class. It also explores how teachers of Ethics can facilitate the movement of the Ethics class towards a friendship and a democracy to come. Can the teacher of Ethics assume the figure of the friend? And what about having the teacher as an enemy? The implications of Derridean friendship on teachers of Ethics, their pedagogies and how, through their very practice of friendship, may question taken for granted dichotomies between friends and enemies are also an important aspects of this study.

During the process of writing this thesis, I was faced with a recurring dilemma, whether to use the masculine or feminine pronoun in referring to subjects involved in friendship. Derrida, in *PF*, deconstructs the figure of the brother, especially with respect to the conceptualisation of fraternity, as essential to notions of democracy. Derrida criticises this notion of brotherhood on the grounds that it leads to an exclusion of those who are not socially and culturally identified as such. So although he criticises the exclusion of the sisterhood within democratic arrangements, his point does not only address the exclusion of the feminine as other even though the feminine might symbolise the exclusion of others as other. Simply put, Derrida argues for a universal friendship that transcends gender without neutralising gender distinctions. My decision to use the masculine pronoun in my writing does not signify my lack of awareness of the patriarchal relational arrangements in democracy. It is more informed by my reading of Aristotle's notion of brotherhood that necessitates the masculine pronoun to make sense. Therefore, for the sake of continuation, I have chosen to use the masculine pronoun throughout my writing. My discussion on Derrida’s critique of the exclusion of the other should make the reader aware of this point.

Chapter I

1 Deconstructing the Classical Concept of Friendship

As a poststructuralist philosopher, Derrida proposes a new way of understanding language and concepts. Whilst structuralists sustain that there is an absolute and fixed meaning to concepts, Derrida, with the use of deconstruction, maintains that concepts do not have absolute meanings but are in constant change. Language, to Derrida (1997), is always changing and evolving and thus one can never claim a full or definite understanding of a particular concept. Derrida observes that the meaning of a concept runs through history keeping a trace of what it signified in the past whilst incorporating new signifiers from the present. This is the condition of possibility for language itself that sustains its conduciveness to newness without closure, *différance* (Derrida, 1997) (refer to 1.3).

This chapter reflects Derrida's (2005b) rethinking of the classical concept of friendship in *The Politics of Friendship*. It identifies the elements that surround Aristotle's understanding of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics* to highlight the limitations of the classical notion of friendship. Love, brotherhood, reciprocity and sameness are deconstructed to "think - in the most faithful, interior way - the structured genealogy of philosophy's concepts, but at the same time to determine [...] what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid" (Derrida, 1981, p.6). What is presumed to be a stable notion of friendship is questioned and destabilised to keep its meaning always open to change and to new possibilities. This discussion shows how *PF* reflects Derrida's political turn in the exploration of the concept of friendship. As declared by Derrida himself during a discussion on politics and friendship at the University of Sussex, all he did in *PF* was directly or indirectly asking political questions even though he confessed that he was trying "to understand [...] and rethink what the political is and what is involved precisely in the dissemination of the political field" (Bennington, 1997, p. 2). He also confirmed, on different occasions, that his deconstructive philosophy is definitely not apolitical and that he can promptly declare that his philosophical pursue intervenes in the political arena (Derrida,

2002c). However, Derrida did not intend to propose a political theory but rather, he was suggesting a new way of thinking about what is involved in the political, inspired by the concept of friendship as something that cannot really be grasped in a definite way.

What is significant in Derrida's exploration is that he impels us into a state of puzzlement and uncertainty which enables the exploration of something radically new. Whilst structuralists claimed that an understanding can be achieved by comparing a concept to its opposite binary (light/dark, male/female, private/public), Derrida maintains that meaning cannot merely be achieved by means of the distinction of binaries. He sustains that a concept can be understood by what it includes and by what it excludes or tries to eliminate. Thus, Derrida argues that in every concept always lies a trace of its opposition and that their oppositionality can be brought closer without cancelling the differences between the two (Marder, 2008). The less privileged or neglected binary is worth attention so that through the relation between binaries we may come to a deeper and alternative understanding of a concept. A possible meaning of the friend, for example, can be achieved by addressing its opposite binary, the enemy, in our understanding. Thus, the trace of the enemy is always present in the meaning of the friend as the two concepts of friend and enemy "intertwine as though they love each other" (Derrida, 2005b, p.72) (refer to 1.5)**.**

1.1 The Classical Concept of Friendship

The heritage of western philosophical literature on friendship is significantly influenced by Aristotle's thoughts in *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bennington, 1997). At the centre of his discussion*,* friendship is presented as "an indispensable [...] beautiful [...]. noble thing" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 252) without which life becomes frustrating and unbearable. The Greek term *philia*, which is commonly translated to brotherly or fraternal love, is the condition proposed by Aristotle for a more satisfying and successful life. Over and above the natural disposition which humans ought to have towards others, friendship implies an active commitment and concrete action towards others that makes communal living possible. Aristotle

attempts to identify the basic elements which constitute friendship. However, although Aristotle (2013) speaks of different forms of friendships, he contends that “it is impossible for all of them to be friendships in accordance with a single account” (p.126). What he thought is worth considering are the particular elements of love, similarity and equality, and the political implications of friendship.

1.1.1 Love

Aristotle (1983) maintains that whilst the person who tries to please everyone and the person who is always in conflict have been designated with a name, the moderate person who acts in virtue has not yet been assigned a name. “This habit or type of character has no recognized name but seems most nearly to resemble friendliness (philia)” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 126). Aristotle (1981) was clear that *philia* is what “causes us to choose to live together” (p. 198) in the quest for “a perfect and self-sufficient life [...] living happily and nobly” (p. 198). The closest word to *philia* for Aristotle seems to be love. He states that people love what is lovable and “that the lovable is either good or pleasant or useful” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 253). At times, certain practices of love are more concerned about getting something in return out of a relationship, such as pleasure or utility. However, Aristotle conceives another kind of love that goes beyond any calculation; love as a virtue. He contends that *philia* or love in friendship is far more superior than the universal and superficial well-wishing, which does not practically manifest itself in concrete actions. In friendship, love is an emotion or attraction translated into *praxis* directed to specific persons close to us. This is why Aristotle (1983) highlights the *action* of loving and asserts that friendship “seems to lie in the loving, rather than in the being loved [...] the virtue of the friend is to love” (p. 268).

Important questions arise here such as: How can a person love another if the person does not *a priori* possess love? Can one provide what he does not already own? Aristotle, concludes that one can only love others on the condition of one’s personal care and love**,** as loving others is an overflow of our self-love. “Friendly relations to others, and all the characteristics by which friendship is defined, seem to be derived from our relations towards ourselves” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 294). Self-loving is

beneficial not just to the good man who acts accordingly but also to others whom the person loves and supports (Aristotle, 1983). This is how self-love is to be understood in Aristotle's corpus on friendship, otherwise, self-love might only be identified with self-gratification or selfishness (Rapp, 2019). Drum (2003) in discussing Aristotle's friendship concludes that the ultimate end of friendship is the personal well-being of both the individual and the lovable friend. Loving in friendship is relational which includes taking an active and challenging role of putting oneself at the service of others. Paradoxically, the more the effort and toil to help a friend, the more the self-loving and self-fulfilling the experience becomes, especially due to one's delight by the beloved's betterment (Aristotle, 1983). Love makes friendship grow stronger while passivity, the greatest enemy of friendship, cools it down. For Aristotle (1983), "friendship is a habit or trained faculty" (p. 262)**,** hence, one has to practise love in friendship to develop an internal disposition towards others.

This way of loving is considered to be essential to the thriving of communal life; friendship is not as a mere social apparatus of personal satisfaction. Aristotle (1983) envisages the community as an arrangement whose success depends mainly on the relationships between its members and that friendship is the virtue or moral activity by which all can achieve their purpose. Friendship, therefore, lies in between personal and communal benefit and what appears to be a private pursuit is at the same time a public action. For Aristotle, it is clear that love in friendship empowers the person's ethical behaviour and ensures both the personal and the common good. With love being the common factor of all good decisions and actions, friendship becomes a mode of living for the attainment of the ultimate goal of the community.

1.1.2 Reciprocity

Friendship can only be complete, according to Aristotle, on the condition of reciprocity. Reciprocating friendship or love goes beyond self-gratification that entails receiving without giving back. Aristotle (1983) maintains that one who "wishes the good of another is called a well-wisher, when the wish is not reciprocated; when the well-wishing is mutual, it is called friendship" (p. 254). Reciprocity is an indispensable condition for both the establishment of friendship and for its endurance since it

“implies mutual trust and the certainty that neither would ever wrong the other” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 259-260). Moreover, in friendship, each person is good, useful or pleasant to the other and this “unites in itself all the conditions of true friendship” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 257-258). This explains why for Aristotle (1981) friendship is for the greatest good of the community because it does not only prevent citizens from harming each other but it contributes to the unity of the community. The reciprocal affection in friendship, based on equality and similarity, is the logical source of balance and equilibrium in a community (Aristotle, 1983).

1.1.3 The Other Self

The conditions of similarity and equality for friendship led Aristotle to refer to the friend by the term of other self: another same person (Pakaluk, 2009). This concept of other self provokes a number of philosophical and practical considerations. How can a friend be himself and another person at the same time? And what compels human beings to treat their friends in the same way they treat themselves? How can two become one with their distinctive and irreplaceable identity and consciousness? Ought the friend to be loved as a true autonomous being or as a perceived integral part of the loving one?

The idea of other self implies that a person is to relate to the friend with the same goodness the person relates to himself. “For the good man stands in the same relation to his friend as to himself, for his friend is another self” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 311). Intimacy and proximity in friendship are a kinship in soul between friends, exhibiting the truest and most profound relationship, even more, intense than familial ties (Smith Pangle, 2003). As Aristotle (1983) contends, “friends have one soul [...] friends have all things in common [...] equality makes friendship” (p. 304)**.** By calling the friend an other self, Aristotle highlights the intimate bond between friends by which the highest degree of benevolence is ensured. Notwithstanding the attractiveness of the notion of the other self, it implies assimilation of the other by the self. This remains problematic when it comes to sustaining the unique being of every person. Ought friendship to accommodate for difference of the other or does it reduce differences into sameness? Should equality necessarily entail sameness?

Isn't it violent to reduce the friend to the same self? Can we imagine friendship between people who are so different to the point that they have nothing in common?

Aristotle insists that differences demand different structures other than friendship. There cannot be a common association of people with different characteristics and divergent objectives. This principle directs Aristotle to conclude that equality and similarity are conditions for friendship as friends are attracted and delighted by the common goodness found in each other. Although Aristotle (1983) accepts that friendship between the unequal can only be possible if a "sort of equality, which seems to be a necessary condition of friendship" (p. 266) is established, he remains doubtful about the feasibility of such friendship. Aristotle associated equality with commonality maintaining that what friends may have in common is not the specific characteristics of who they are but their equality. He arrives at this conclusion because he identifies universal virtues that friends should have which make them similar.

1.1.4 Calculation

In *The Politics*, Aristotle (1981) discusses how people in a community ought to strive for the highest good of every citizen and, in *NE,* friendship is presented as the optimal means for the fulfilment of this goal. However, Aristotle contends that there is a limit to the number of friends one can have and that an intense reciprocal relationship based on love between all members of the community is not possible. To Aristotle, the number of people whom we actually love and care for is very limited unless we love superficially. "It is impossible to have friendship, in the full sense of the word, for many people at the same time, just as it is impossible to be in love with many persons at once" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 263). Friendship, for Aristotle, is more about the quality of intimate shared life rather than the general sentiment towards many. Having yourself shared with many may lead to no true friendship at all as intimacy would be lost to the generality of friends. "For it seems that love is a sort of superlative friendship and that this is only possible towards one person, and an ardent friendship towards a few only" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 313). The impossibility of befriending all others in the community with the same commitment and dedication

raises political questions. One pertinent question related to the importance given to love in sustaining communities is: how are other people in the community named if not considered friends?

1.1.5 The Political Dimension

The topographies of Aristotelian friendship, as I argued earlier, are made possible in a context where equality and reciprocal relationships are developed. What led Aristotle to identify the relevance of friendship to civic activity and the political arrangement of a community were the ethical implications of friendship to the community. Although the universality of the law safeguards the entitlement of each individual, it is the ethical relations of friendship that can fulfil or supplement the world of politics. In Aristotle's thoughts, friendship is a necessary precondition to justice and a directly proportional relation exists between the two. "The claims of justice, in fact, are such as to increase as friendship increases, both having the same field and growing *pari passu*" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 270). By its sense of benevolence to the other, friendship surpasses the obligations imposed by law and impels everyone to treat each other favourably and respectfully. This is the positive ethical-political consequence that the association of friends has on the community. Individuals become intrinsically motivated to act for the common good. "If citizens be friends, they have no need of justice, but though they be just, they need friendship or love also; indeed, the completest realization of justice seems to be the realization of friendship or love also" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 252). That is, friends, become alert of the needs of others and promptly assist them in whatever circumstance they may find themselves in. Through this association, a complete form of justice can be established. For Aristotle, the highest form of political justice is facilitated by the awareness of the reciprocal ties by which citizens feel obliged to treat others as themselves (Irrera, 2015).

1.1.6 Brotherhood

When speaking about the composition of the polis in *NE*, Aristotle refers to an association of friends which sustains the community. This political association of

friends is compared by Aristotle (1983; 2013) to the relationship between brothers, that is, brotherhood. This spirit of fraternity, according to Aristotle (1983), surmounts the possible emergent strains and “holds the members of a society together” (p. 155). Like brothers within a family who are nurtured and educated together, members in the community might benefit from “the longest and the surest experience of one another” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 278). The main reason behind such cohesion of similar people would be the mutual love and respect that brothers show to each other (Aristotle, 1983). Furthermore, brotherhood presumes a just distribution of goods as brothers “share all things in common” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 270). Sherman (1987) explains this fraternal bond as a relationship which “promote each other's good in a privileged way” (p. 607). Fraternal friendship entails a degree of commitment as if our friends are brothers and are therefore by right entitled to our care, support and benevolence. In Aristotle’s (1983) words, “it is a grosser wrong [...] to refuse help to a brother than to a stranger” (p. 270); privileging the brother over the other. Such positive discrimination within brotherhood ensures political stability and provides the necessary conditions for its fulfilment. Despite the promises stressed, Aristotle (1983) maintains that members in a fraternity are to “follow the same rule” (p. 275), that is, being regulated by a constitution that constitutes the most equal association. This kind of fraternal friendship, qua brotherhood, can be lived by fellow citizens “in democracies [...] for there the citizens, being equal, have many things in common” (Aristotle, 1983, p. 276). This ethical commitment is what binds friends together as brothers; pointing to the need that they share things in common to be considered as equal.

1.2 The Political Turn of Derridean Friendship

In *PF,* Derrida takes an innovative political perspective on friendship compared to those that appear in canonical texts in political theory particularly those presented by the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Derrida rediscovers the importance of friendship in politics and relocates it at the centre of political discourse after being marginalised over the years. Tracing the genealogical philosophical notions of friendship from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche, Schmitt and Levinas, Derrida points to the limitations of Westernized notions of friendship and adopts a resolute attitude

of non-conformity and principled resistance to problematize the “is” of canonical view of friendship. He does this by “deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjoining, putting “out of joint” the authority of the “is”” (Derrida, 1995c, p. 25). Although Derrida is interested in reflecting on *what* and *who* the friend is, he refuses to commit himself to a definite and authoritative conclusion. Such eventuality would limit the possibility of being otherwise and at the same time restrict the openness to an alternative type of friendship.

Derrida’s exploration of the political dimension of friendship is provoked by the aporetic statement attributed to Aristotle “Oh my friends, there is no friend” by Montaigne (1993, p. 99). This refers to a metaphysics of absence where friendship cannot be conceived only through its visibility but as something that is not yet, that remains to be discovered. This exploration persists insofar as it remains open rather than closed by definitions. Derrida’s re-thinking challenges authoritative texts on friendship and this act is already in itself political as it refers to every expression of power to act in a particular way and hence to act out of our power to decide. Rather than an internal obligation to act appropriately as articulated by Aristotle, Derrida (2005b) perceives friendship as an act of man which implies the “faculty of decision, of deliberation or reflective choice” (p. 198). At the same time, however, converging with Aristotle, Derrida (2005b) argues that the *telos* of the state is the good life which “corresponds to the positivity of living together” (p. 199) and this is nothing but friendship. The filiations required for the dynamics of the social and political bond within the community proves that “*philia* seems [...] to be thoroughly political” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 200). Hutter (1978) notes that Aristotle’s effort to associate friendship with democratic principles shifted friendship, not just from the personal to the social-political and from passion to ethos, but also to a closer association with citizenship.

Derrida sustains that both friendship and the community/state share the same origins and the same motives. The social bond, fraternity, oath and fidelity, justice and the good life are among the issues mentioned by Derrida which address both friendship and the community. The philosophical discourse on friendship is similar to discourse on community. This is the unequivocal justification which “bind together, in their very essence” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 198) friendship and politics.

Derrida, in *PF*, explores and argues for the discovery of a radically new friendship that offers humanity the challenge of a more inclusive democratic way of living together which promises an inspiring new future. For Derrida, friendship and democracy are so interrelated that the future of the political is unified with the future of friends. Similar to Aristotle, he thinks that the failure of friendship will result in tragic consequences in the political realm with social deterioration, conflicts and eventually, war. “The disagreement between those who share kinship ties or origins… is stasis, the discord or war that is sometimes called civil” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 91). Derrida’s reflection on friendship inspires a performative commitment that could offer a new vision of what politics could become. Political friendship is about social bonds which provide citizens with the capacity to envision a collective and promising future. It goes without saying that such political discourse raises questions that Derrida seeks to discuss in his quest for a radically new way of living together. Does this collectivity in becoming a community imply homogeneity? Is individuality lost in order to be gathered as one group? Do friends have to become similar to be able to live equally in a democracy? Does fraternity consist of a social bond between men (as similar and equal) that excludes women from political discourse? Are citizens in a democracy free to be different?

One notices that many of these questions are similar to those addressed to Aristotle’s political aspects of friendship, which were discussed in the sections on numbers and calculations, equality, fraternity, unity, similarity (refer to 1.1). In *PF*, Derrida identifies and at the same time problematises these prevailing concepts in the canonical model of friendship which, as he argues, are politically meaningful and significant to the democracy ‘to come’ that will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.3 Deconstruction

Considered as the father of deconstruction, Derrida acknowledges that although deconstruction seems to be concerned exclusively about the quest for meaning, it has its political implications as well. Deconstruction denaturalises and questions what appears to be natural and what was considered stable throughout history. Derrida, in the documentary film *Derrida* directed by Dick & Ziering Kofman (2002),

expresses that the fact that some writers invest their authority in a text which by time is considered as fixed and stabilized truth for centuries, cannot be ignored. The reader has to read the text and be able to interpret it in a rigorous and inventive way so as not to get paralysed by a language system. There might be value in those ideas that we generally ignore. What is evident is that Derrida is not after the reproduction of stereotypical discourse but the improvisation of a new language. Holding that language is to remain an open system, Derrida is after the discovery of new meanings and truth which may be hidden because of our excessive loyalty to a particular idea. To deconstruct an idea or a concept implies the revelation of the defects and confusion in our understanding to live more comfortably in a permanent instability of knowledge. Living in a state of puzzlement, or aporia, as articulated by Derrida, is definitely not a sign of weakness but a central sign of maturity of the mind. In *Memories for Paul de Man (1989)*, Derrida asserts that by deconstruction we are not after a definite conclusion or the elimination of a belief. Rather, we are to leave the question suspended for the time being until a better understanding in the future. This idea of a temporary conclusion in the quest for meaning was coined in the term *différance*. This new concept incorporates two important elements in Derrida's deconstructive approach. *Différance* denotes that meaning is not static and changes through time (to differ) and that a definite conclusion has to be postponed for the future to come (to defer).

It is important to highlight the fact that deconstruction was never considered a method or a set of fixed rules which are to be applied and repeated to the text being examined. In doing so, one would be reducing its openness. As Derrida himself states in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (Caputo, 1997), it would be betraying its very own nature, that of cracking nutshells open, disturbing their stability, serenity and containment. However, what Derrida (2005b) is unequivocal about is that deconstruction is intimately linked to democracy, claiming that there is "no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction" (p. 105). He holds that democracy can only be rethought in a deconstructive way to help us envision a new democracy. Conversely, deconstruction can only happen in a democracy where the indefinite right to question is intrinsic to it.

1.3.1 Democracy

Considering Derrida's understanding that deconstruction affects the political realm, one understands why Derrida is interested in the genealogy of democracy when discussing friendship. The reflections made by ancient Greek philosophers about democracy established concepts which streamed throughout history as canonical. Derrida questions and challenges such authorising language that established the meaning of friendship and democracy leading him to an exploration of the very openness of meaning that democracy itself demands. In fact, defining the true meaning of the word democracy might be challenging and if there is one, as Plato said, it is stored in heaven and not yet revealed to us (Crick, 2002). Patton (2007) observes that although *PF* seems not to be discussing democracy but friendship, the concept of democracy and its relation to friendship is the central focus of his reflection.

In *PF*, Derrida (2005b) explains that the rethinking of friendship and democracy can either be approached by "forging of other concepts" (p. 158) which would institute a new politics or "keep the 'old name' and analyse the logic and the topic of the concept differently" (p. 158). Derrida opts for negotiating between these two approaches and "insists that there can no longer be a choice. Not only must we invent a new politics, as well as a new concept of politics, but we cannot simply give up on the old concepts" (Thomson, 2005, p. 22)**.** For Derrida (2002c), the traditional concepts, which he refers to as "given concepts of democracy" (p. 178), are limited and fall short of what democracy should entail. But still, Derrida does not want "to abandon the democratic tradition but to open up the possibility of a different way of understanding this peculiar manner of living together with others" (Patton, 2007, p. 156) beyond any traditional concepts. Derrida (2005b) argues that the traits and implications of the classical concept of democracy render democracy as an 'always wounded' regime which, "as is well known, will always have been problematic" (p. viii). However, this is the political strength of democracy, that is, it "always puts itself at issue [and] therefore, returns to and problematizes its own foundations in each democratic event" (Mansfield, 2011, p. 232). Although these "knots of thoughts" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 198) in the rethinking of the classical concept of democracy will

not pledge “an analytical outcome” (p. 199), they surely promise “another experience or another interpretation” (p. 199).

1.3.2 Equality and Freedom

Among the predominant attributes of the democratic society rethought by Derrida there are those of equality and freedom. Derrida focuses on the tension generated from being equal and being free to exercise one’s singularity at once. The issue with these two concepts is that equality may imply that one might not be free to be different due to the difference being generally conceived as hierarchical, that is, one difference is compared to another and therefore considered superior or inferior to the other (refer to 1.1.3). Can democracy be equal and free at the same time? Democracy promises freedom of speech and press, and freedom of choice according to one’s aspirations. Freedom within a democracy respects the alterity of every irreducible singularity. Correspondingly, democracy functions with the calculations of majorities without identifiable subjects, treating all subjects equally. Nancy (1993) writes that the essence of democracy is the excess of freedom of those who share an equal relationship following the disappearance of the dominating figure of the parent. This “excess of freedom” (Nancy, 1993, p. 71) is examined by Derrida in *PF* in relation to responsibility. As stated in *Rogues* (2005d), the power to decide and act freely entails responsibility. Hence, we can only speak of ‘responsible freedom’ if democracy is to pledge equally free citizens. He visions a democracy in which all persons are equally free and where freedom is granted in so far as it respects the rights of others.

Another characteristic of the traditional concept of democracy examined by Derrida (2005b) is “the necessity of having to count one's friends, to count the others” (p. 22). This refers to the main mechanism used in a democratic setting to show the will of its people; the calculation of majorities. In other words, democracy renders each subject unidentified as all persons are reduced to a homogenous group as dictated by the same majority. Paradoxically, the same democratic process which gives voice to the people, renders each voice in a single voice, obliterating the vast spectrum of singular voices. This “quantification of singularities” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 22) renders

democracy a politics that violently reduces the plurality of its subjects to commonality. The counting of friends assumes sameness, very much like notions of fraternity, that assume that brothers are exactly alike because they are born of the same parent. Hence, Derrida questions if there can be a democratic community that respects the infinite diversity of its people and concurrently, assures the unity of its subjects.

In deconstructing democracy, Derrida raises questions about the power and ability of democracy to embrace differences and to remain open to question and rethink itself. Derrida, in *Rogues* (2005d), speaks of the auto-immune logic of democracy. He notes that in an attempt to protect itself from destruction, democracy merges all singularities into one nation, unifying the heterogenous collectivity into a homogeneous unit, compromising the essential element of multiplicity for which democracy was established in the first place. On the other hand, the entertaining of differences may open democracy to anti-democratic elements. This may render democracy vulnerable to enemies of democracy; self-inflicting wounds which may ultimately endanger its existence.

1.3.3 Fraternity

Derrida's deconstruction of democracy reaches its peak with a rethinking of democracy which is not reducible to citizenship and to a confined nation-state that is overseen by some dominant figure (Bennington, 1997). Aristotle's paradigm of brotherhood between citizens, though sounding respectable and promising, is very problematic and raises pertinent questions about who is to be considered equal in a democracy (Bennington, 1997). Derrida (2005b) stresses that through history, democracy was portrayed as a political regime which "is rarely determined in the absence of confraternity or brotherhood" (p. xiii). The natural bond between brothers is taken to the political sphere by Greek philosophers and applied as a model to democracy: "fraternity and democracy, their co-implication or mutual appurtenance would be quasi-tautological" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 198). The main criterion that justifies the fraternal bond within a democracy is that of nationality. Thus, the political brotherhood of democracy is formed by a circle of men who gather together in an

oath of alliance. They are treated equally and benefit from communal sharing due to the assumed naturality of their bonds in being sons of the same nation (Derrida, 2005b).

Derrida was constantly troubled with the concept of fraternity in the democratic tradition due to the discrimination between the brothers (citizens) and non-brothers (strangers) to the extent of being hostile and “very unfriendly to everyone who falls outside its fraternal scope” (Caputo, 1999, p. 189). In *PF*, Derrida (2005b) evidently conveys his uneasiness with the political consequences of brotherhood on the other: “Why would *autrui* be in the first place a brother? And especially why "our brothers"? Whose brothers? Who, then, are we? Who is this "we"?” (p. 304). Derrida is certainly not against the phrases of ‘brother’ or ‘fraternity’ or the relationship they signify, but he is troubled with the privileged figure these terms imply and the political implications of such language (Caputo, 1999).

Derrida (2005b) is critical of the natural bonds implied by brotherhood within the realm of democracy. If democracy is so appealed to equality and justice, can it be established on the “genetic tie” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 99)? Can democracy ever be just if it discriminates on the basis of birth? If membership in a democratic community is by the virtue of the natural “tie of birth” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 99) before any other personal decision, is it as unequal as any other political structure based on wealth, gender, class or religion? In *PF*, therefore, Derrida (2005b) conceptualises a community without any natural kinship, established on the logic of the ‘without’: a “community without community, relation without relation, sharing without sharing” (p. 298). Democracy should be able to embrace people who have nothing in common into a community. This is an important point as even brothers cannot be conceived exactly alike and their blood or ties due to citizenship should not limit their freedom beyond familial ties. The deconstruction of fraternity within democracy attempts to eliminate the privilege of the natural community which strongly distances and insulates itself from the others (Caputo, 1999). Can democracy tolerate privileging those who qualify as brothers whilst promoting equality? Can discrimination in favour of brothers (citizens) ever be a justifiable trait of a democratic society founded on equality? Caputo (1999) explains that what Derrida is after, is a deconstruction of

community, also in terms of fraternity, as “an impossible axiomatic which remains to be thought” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 81).

Another aspect that Derrida finds problematic in the notion of fraternity is the masculinised aspects of the bond and the patriarchal implications of a phallocentric view that dominates democracy. Traditional democracy for Derrida (2005b) “is a politics of friendship founded on an anthropocentric concept” (p. 198). The virtue (*vir*) of a community founded on the good moral character of its members refers to patriarchal connections and the authority of the masculine figure in a democracy which is “reserved to man since it implies this faculty of decision, of deliberation or reflective choice” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 198). Where does the figure of the ‘woman’ stand in the classical democratic community? Does the canonical concept of democracy intentionally suppress the feminine whilst favouring the masculine? As I will explain in a later section, the assumption that brotherhood includes sisterhood is a good example of this dominant systemization of masculine and predominant patriarchal politics (refer to 2.4.1)**.**

These reflections on the foundations of democracy, highlighted by Derrida‘s deconstructive inquiry, reveal how democracy is inherently destabilised by the aporias that keep it always open to change (Matthews, 2013).

1.4 Rethinking Friendship beyond Brotherhood

Derrida (2005b) sets off on rethinking friendship in *PF* with the premise that there is “no democracy without the community of friends” (p. 22). The presence of the community of friends in the democratic community is so vital that we cannot imagine a democracy without its presence. Relegating friendship to the private sphere in community life would be a mistake since the correlation between friendship and the conditions for democracy is remarkably strong (Hayoz, 2016). Friendships are so deeply rooted in the democratic regime that an analysis and a rethinking of friendship out of democracy are inconceivable. It is therefore important to delve further into Derrida’s meaning of friendship and his ideas on how friendship works on the democratic polity.

When speaking on friendship, Derrida does not intend to advocate or submit to the authority of the great discourses on friendship. Rather, he intends to assume responsibility and speak up about friendship which is more focused on the actions which originate from friendship than have actions pre-determined by definitions or meaning of friendship as Aristotle does. This new approach to friendship is done without lacking respect or demeaning Aristotle's authority on friendship who "stands guard over the very form of our sentences on the subject of friendship" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 6) and "forms our precomprehension at the very moment when we attempt, as we are about to do, to go back over it, even against it" (p. 6). Whilst acknowledging Aristotle's predominant discourse on friendship, Derrida (2005b) dares to take a stand, refusing to be the "spokesman of another" (p. 2) and shoulders responsibility when rethinking friendship. "Properly speaking, the philosophical question of friendship [...] tends to be dealt with under conventional constraints that are already formed, though not without serious complications, in what survives of Aristotle's extraordinary corpus" (Phillips, 2007, p. 156). This is precisely what Derrida does when reconsidering the concept of friendship and its ethical implications implied in major canonical texts.

Caputo (1999) explains that Derrida aspires for a "friendship beyond the fraternalism of the canonical concept of friendship that has contracted democracy to something less than it is, a friendship that can only be measured by the measurelessness of its gift" (p. 186). Derrida (2005b) longs for a politics of friendship that "would no longer imply the motifs of community, appurtenance or sharing, whatever the sign assigned to them. Affirmed, negated or neutralized, these 'communitarian' or 'communal' values always risk bringing a brother back" (p. 298). This is why Derrida is after a new and unpredictable experience of friendship which he conceives as being on its way.

1.5 The Aporia of Friendship

In the introduction of this chapter, I discussed the issue of binary oppositions that Derrida seeks to deconstruct and his attention to a metaphysics of absence from which possibilities to thinking something otherwise is yet to come. This applies to the

idea of friendship that Derrida conceives as a possibility that cannot be readily grasped. What is relevant to my discussion here is his contention that “the meaning and the phenomenon of friendship would never appear unless the figure of the enemy had already called it up in advance” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 153), putting friendship into question. As Derrida (2005b) states, the friend is a wounding question: “no friend without the possible wound” (p. 153).

The internal tension at the heart of the traditional notion of friendship, uncovered by Derrida, leads him to analyse the notion of friendship through the process of *différance* (refer to 1.3). Derrida invites us to reflect on friendship, by having a closer look at the figure of the enemy. We cannot eliminate the figure of the enemy from our understanding of the friend, as the enemy is always a returning ‘phantom’ to the friend. “The two concepts (friend/enemy) consequently intersect and ceaselessly change places. They intertwine, as though they loved each other, all along a spiralled hyperbole” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 72). It is also interesting how Derrida structures his political philosophy based on the presence of the enemy which is always at the heart of democracy and of friendship. “The enemy is then my best friend. He hates me in the name of friendship, of an unconscious or sublime friendship” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 72).

What does Derrida mean by the enemy? He declares that we need to know who the enemy is, or rather the person/s whom the word enemy is referring to. On reflecting on the enemy, Derrida analyses Carl Schmitt’s political notion of the friend-enemy in *The Concept of the Political* (1932). Schmitt warns about the danger of the depoliticisation of the enemy. Lack of relations with the enemy will result in the neutralisation of politics so that the question of the enemy does not feature except in terms of the enemy’s annihilation. For political discourse to continue, a reinvention and a re-politicisation of the enemy should be advocated. “Should that opposition erase itself, and war likewise, the regime called 'politics' loses its borders or its specificity” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 85). However, Derrida (2005b) describes Schmitt as a merciless and hostile philosopher of the “absolute enemy” (p. 157) who advocates the killing with impunity of the enemy. According to Schmitt, “the defining feature of the enemy is that we are prepared really and physically to kill him” (Caputo, 1999, p.

194). Ironically, this logic of war and killing makes boundaries possible, thus stabilises political order and makes friendship possible.

Derrida suggests that the notion of Schmitt's 'political' should be rethought and dreams of a new politics which renounces the killing of the enemy. Derrida, however, remains troubled by the logic of fraternalisation which establishes a state of murderous brothers ready to annihilate the other; friends who come together to kill the enemy. In this case, the binary opposition between friend and enemy is reinforced to think of friends in terms of what they are not, that is, enemies, and to literally establish divergence and war on the enemy. Therefore, what Derrida (2005b) dreams of, is a non-fraternal 'faith' which makes possible the affiliation of the friend and the enemy whereby the alterity "without hierarchical difference" (p. 232) is respected. Privileging the friend to eliminate the oppositional figure of the enemy would make us the true and worse enemies of political discourse, and specifically, of the politics of friendship. Derrida refers to this aporia as political suicide or self-immunity, for the killing of the enemy eliminates the possibility of the openness to friendship. Without the enemy, both democracy and friendship will lose their significance and become overridden by an emerging monstrous form of violence. We would be mistaken in thinking that losing the enemy would necessarily bring forth peace and fraternity (Caputo, 1999). Derrida, therefore, maintains that the enemy is to be welcomed as a friend without hatred or hostility. This would be "the totally pure experience of the friend-enemy in its political essence" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 87).

The internal movement of the friend-enemy aporia becomes more evident when Derrida declares that the enemy is the "non-I", i.e., all others including my brothers. He suggests, therefore, that the two concepts of friend and enemy act "as though they loved each other" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 72). Once the enemy is recognised in the friend, an identification of myself with the enemy occurs. As soon as one calls himself into question, by identifying oneself with the enemy, one declares that one becomes the enemy of one's self. "This concept of 'one's own enemy' at once confirms and contradicts everything Schmitt has said about the enemy" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 163). According to Derrida, this concept of friend-enemy, I-brother, myself-other, places the enemy at the closest, most familial and proper position. The affinity between the friend and the enemy is so intense that both realities can only exist on

the condition of their opposition and their reciprocal interdependence which makes it impossible to identify the friend from the enemy. A definite border between the enemy and the friend becomes so indistinguishable that one can be hostile towards a friend and conversely, a lover to the enemy. This renders the identification between a friend and enemy in non-binary ways: “Who is the friend? Who is the enemy? [...] Who am I? Friend? Enemy? Both?” (Cleveland, 1999, p. 576). Derrida leaves us with the *perhaps*; denoting the undecidability, indeterminacy and uncertainty of friendship (Cleveland, 1999). The seemingly contradictory performance of addressing friends to declare that there are none (Oh my friends, there is no friend), and reversely, addressing the enemy to declare that there is no enemy (Oh my enemy, there is no enemy) holds us captured in what Derrida (2005b) defines as “the madness of truth of friendship” (p. 52). Nevertheless what Derrida wants to highlight is the possibility of being enemy and friend at the same time and perhaps that, being an enemy, does not necessarily preclude the possibilities of being friends and vice versa.

This also refers to situations where every decision and action performed between friends (including love), involves a certain amount of risk since the enemy remains present in my best friend and my brother. In *PF*, Derrida (2005b) refers to the aphorism: “Do be my enemy for friendship’s sake!” (p. 26). This commanding voice is uttered in the name of friendship so as to reveal the friend through the figure of the enemy. This proves “the incessant return of his ghosts” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 73), the returning of the enemy in the figure of the friend. However, for Derrida (2005b), loving the friend and the enemy he can become, is a “sign of freedom” (p. 282). Freedom in the sense that friendship would become an unreciprocated gift offered to the other out of freedom which goes beyond the economy of equality and reciprocity. A deliberate act of love performed in this aporetic context means that one loves somebody for who he is, even if he is usually thought of as an enemy. Derrida announces a ‘friendship to come’ which is founded neither on reciprocity nor proximity. This preference for loving the friend before being loved destabilises the equilibrium of the reciprocal dimension emphasised by canonical friendship. Like a prophet, Derrida proclaims the possible arrival of lovers of humanity which will eventually bring about a new way of living together; a new democracy. These

‘universal brothers’ will be capable of “loving one's enemy as one's neighbour or as oneself” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 285).

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter reveals how Derrida’s deconstruction of the basic elements of canonical friendship makes us more aware of elements that limit our understanding and imagination of friendship. The questioning of authoritative notions can help us envision a friendship that transcends the exclusivity of brotherhood and the conditions of sameness and reciprocity. It cracks open friendship to limitless possibilities that can be regarded as madness, but at the same time, it makes possible a new way of living together. What is radically disrupting is the encounter with the absolute other, especially with the enemy, that may facilitate the exploration of a truly radical friendship and democracy that is on its way. This deconstructive approach to friendship and democracy puts us in a movement toward an alternative kind of friendship and democracy that shall remain to be discovered.

Chapter II

2 Towards a New Experience of Friendship

Chapter I discusses how Derrida deconstructs canonical friendship to prevent it from being conditioned by canonical definitions whilst refusing to commit himself to an authoritative conclusion. In similar ways, a historically stable meaning of democracy may go through such a drastic change that it may be deemed as impossible and incomprehensible. This is the reason why Derrida (2002c) claims that “democracy is the political experience of the impossible, the political experience of opening to the other as possibility of impossibility” (p. 194). The relationships within a democracy that Derrida demands is so challenging that it can never be fully accomplished and always remains yet to come.

> For democracy remains to come; this is its essence in so far as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to come: even when there is democracy, it never exists, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept. (Derrida, 2005b, p. 306)

For Derrida, this new and radical experience of democracy to come runs parallel to a friendship to come. This chapter discusses the conditions of possibility for the coming of an alternative experience of friendship and democracy. Mainly, what Derrida intends, is to push these conditions to their absolute limits to make possible what is conceived as impossible experiences. At the core of the argument is lovence that predisposes the individual to act in absolute benevolence towards others without expecting any form of exchange. In addition to lovence, this chapter argues that friendship to come necessitates unconditional welcoming of the other and the ability to respond to the other in a non-violent manner. This approach demands the host to assume the vulnerable position before the friend so as to protect the uniqueness of the other and to be ready to respond to the appeal of the friend.

2.1 Friendship to come

Despite the immemorial past of friendship, Derrida (2005b) affirms that the condition of possibility for friendship shall remain a “suspended [...] undecidable qua the time of reflection” (p. 15). It is interesting how Derrida warns about the unpredictable outcome which may result in the process of searching for new meaning. When someone speaks, “some force in him or her is also striving not to be understood, approved, accepted in consensus - not immediately, not fully, and therefore not in the immediacy and plenitude of tomorrow” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 218). Thus, this exploration of a new concept to friendship will ultimately provide us either with a new alternative in politics of friendship or with the possibility of a completely opposite experience “of radical evil, of perjury, and of absolute crime” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 219). When reconsidering friendship, Derrida is aware that the concept could never be fully grasped to the point of claiming a conclusive meaning and thus he hesitates to give a schema on how to have a perfect political community life or a philosophy of friendship which summarizes and subsumes a stable and fixed political meaning of friendship. Derrida’s deconstruction of friendship leaves friendship in an incessant tension between amity and enmity, public and private, reciprocity and asymmetry, homogeneity and heterogeneity.

In view of such a promising claim, one may ask whether this new possibility of friendship is “improbable, and perhaps as impossible to find, as a black swan” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 258). In fact, the apostrophe ‘Oh my friends, there is no friend’, impels Derrida to reflect on whether friendship is possible after all. Despite the history of friendship, Derrida perceives friendship as a prayer and experience of a promise and of waiting which is never given completely in the present but always open to the future. This led some academics like Dallmayr (1999) to question “Can one still speak of friendship if 'friends' are always safely elsewhere, promising something in the indefinite future (perhaps on a transcendental plane)?” (p. 126). Is Derrida’s notion of friendship so elusive that it can never be present? As I will argue in 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, Derrida consents that friendship is realisable in a community life where people are attentive to the plea of each other.

2.2 Democracy to come

The inherent power within democracy to self-deconstruct its basic concepts, to remain open to challenges and de-limit itself to perfection, helps Derrida to envision a new democratic experience. “Democracy is what it is only in the différance by which it defers itself and differs from itself” (Derrida, 2005d, p. 38). His vision of democracy is founded on these two important principles which denote its ever-changing conditions (*to differ*) and the infinite postponement of its ultimate objective (*to defer*) (Derrida, 2002b). The force within democracy against an original static meaning in favour of a future which is always in a progressive transformation leads Derrida to the notion of the ‘perhaps’ which flows throughout his philosophical corpus (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006). Derrida acknowledges that despite all the effort to fully grasp the notion of democracy, it will remain ‘perhaps’. “What is going to come, perhaps, is not only this or that; it is at last the thought of the perhaps, the perhaps itself” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 29). What will come shall remain undetermined and surprising, definitely not a continuation of what has been happening till this day. Democracy, similar to friendship, is a utopic political condition which we eagerly yearn for. Derrida’s notion of a democracy to come is based on the promise of an authentic democracy which destabilises the same notion of democracy and implies an endless process of improvement and perfectability. It will infinitely remain a promise because of its impossibility. As Derrida states, it is a messianic promise of the future without the figure of a messiah, referring to a promise without a definite target, that is at the same time always open to new possibilities (Thomson, 2005). This continuous movement towards the future should not leave us stranded and helpless but rather, it enforces on us a sense of duty to actively strive for a better democracy. It is important to note here, that for Derrida, the democracy to come is not confined in a form of political regime or organisation but a kind of experience where equality, justice, inclusivity and respect for the singularity of the other is at work, here and now. This is the injunction we have to subscribe to without any delay.

> So when I speak of a 'democracy to come', I don't mean a future democracy, a new regime, a new organisation of nation-states (although this may be hoped for) but I mean this 'to come': the promise of an authentic democracy which is

> never embodied in what we call democracy. This is a way of going on criticising what is everywhere given today under the name of democracy in our societies. This doesn't mean that 'democracy to come' will be simply a future democracy correcting or improving the actual conditions of the so-called democracies, it means first of all that this democracy we dream of is linked in its concept to a promise. (Bennington, 1997, p. 5)

Being the only system “in which, in principle, one has or assumes the right to criticize everything publicly, including the idea of democracy, its concept, its history, and its name” (Derrida, 2005d, p. 29), democracy remains in a never-ending process of self-actualisation. This necessary restlessness at the heart of democracy is what makes it a site of promise and open potential for a democratic future (Matthews, 2013).

2.3 Aimance

Deeply aware of the force of friendship on humanity, in its way for a new democratic experience, Derrida focuses his thoughts on the *praxis* of friendship rather than its epistemological or poetic aspect. Life in the community is fundamentally based on human behaviour towards others which can never be fixated or programmed whilst demanding prompt and spontaneous action. Phillips (2007) states that Derrida’s notion of friendship “is governed by the philosophical structure of the conscious and rational act” (p. 159). It relegates the emotional element to the deliberate and conscious act; “an action before a passion” (Phillips, 2007, p. 8). The basis of political friendship, at the centre of Derrida’s text, is the unconditional disposition to act in a beneficial way towards others. Derrida labels this disposition to love the other with the term ‘aimance’, considering it worthwhile and beneficial for communal living.

> Beyond all ulterior frontiers between love and friendship, but also between the passive and active voices, between the loving and the being-loved, what is at stake is 'lovence' (*aimance*). You must know how *it can be more worthwhile* to love lovence. [...] a singular preference destabilizes and renders dissymmetrical the equilibrium of all difference: an *it is more worthwhile* gives precedence to

> the act over potentiality. An activity carries it away, it prevails over passivity. (Derrida, 2005b, p. 7, emphasis in original)

Derrida (1996) admits that aimance is “a certain experience of friendship perhaps unthinkable today and unthought-of within the historical determination of friendship in the West” (p. 85). Aimance, or what he also terms as lovence, goes beyond what is traditionally associated with friendship. Derrida (2005b) describes lovence as the “love in friendship, lovence beyond love and friendship following their determined figures, beyond all this book's trajectories of reading, beyond all ages, cultures and traditions of loving” (p. 69). What aimance attempts to attain is a condition of possibility for a community of friends whereby friendship propagates between all individuals (Thomson, 2015). Derrida envisions a kind of limitless and open community grounded in this new relationship of lovence that comprises the democratic capacity to deconstruct its self-delimitation and conditionality (Thomson, 2005).

The notion of aimance, as perceived by Derrida, surmounts the distinction between those whom one calls friends and the excluded others. It is “a relationality prior to any activation or instantiation in the act of befriending” (Thomson, 2005, p. 15). Derrida (2005b) conceives lovence as “the so-called middle voice, on the near or far side of loving (friendship or love), of activity or passivity, decision or passion” (p. 25). This dream of aimance envisions a ‘non-appropriative’ and a non-romantic relationship that excludes violence and which demands undecidability and infinite responsibility. When “preferring my friends, even by calling them friends” (Thomson, 2005, p. 16), I will be excluding all the others, betraying the openness of friendship to all as fostered by aimance. At the very moment of selecting one’s friends, Derrida (2005b) perceives “the logic of fraternization” (p. 159) and the becoming-irresponsible in excluding the remaining others. Derrida yearns for a community of people who in the name of lovence are open and ready for a friendship with the ‘altogether different other’; becoming universal brothers (refer to 1.3.3).

For Derrida, friendship is already present before it is offered as a gift to the other. For how can one offer the gift of friendship if it is not already present in the person? “If I give you friendship, it is because there is friendship” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 235).

Friendship is a present call inviting the other to a relationship which is both of the present and the future, pointing towards what is still to come. “0 my friends, be my friends, I love you, love me, I will love you, let us exchange this promise, we will exchange it, will we not ...” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 235).

Intentionally, in a deconstructive manner, Derrida postpones any definite conclusion on aimance, leaving the notion unsettled and fluid so as to remain open to new interpretation and experience (refer to 1.3). Derrida is more interested in pushing the concept of friendship and its implications to the limits rather than achieving a complete definition of lovence (Haddad, 2015). This goes in line with an ongoing re-examination of the assumed conditions of democratic arrangements.

2.4 Conditions of Possibility for Friendship

Derrida (2005b), therefore, pushes the conditions of irreducibility, hospitality and responsibility to their absolute and unconditioned limits in his exploration of a new way “to think and live a politics, a friendship, a justice” (p. 105). The possibility of these ‘impossible’ practices cultivates the capacity of lovence “so as to allow for the passage toward the other” (Derrida, 1992a, p. 341) in the coming of the new experience of friendship and democracy.

2.4.1 The Irreducible Other

In his quest for a friendship “which goes beyond this proximity of the congeneric double” (p. viii), Derrida (2005b) reflects on the possibility of friendship that embraces alterity. Notwithstanding the beautiful and affectionate name of ‘brother’, as stated by Montaigne (1993), why should we presume resemblance and harmony between brothers? Are brothers the same? Are brothers always at peace? Can brothers be at war? Lynch (2002) states that the fraternal term ‘brother’ is used by Montaigne to sustain the permanence and irreversible “fusion of souls” (p. 100) between friends. Montaigne (1993) dares to say that in friendship people “mix and blend one into the other in so perfect a union that the seam which has joined them is effaced and disappears” (p. 97). Derrida contests this conventional tenuous dream

which is presumed as if it is something natural. Instead of an impossible idealisation, Derridean friendship is a relationship that is encompassed with the threat and challenge. It is in the reality of differences and full respect for distinct others that one embraces the alterity of the genuine other. The distinguished alterity which separates the self from the other becomes the same foundation and condition of possibility for a new relationship. As Blanchot (1997) assertively instructs, we must cease to seek what essentially links us together and start greeting the other in “relation with the unknown in which they greet us as well, in our estrangement” (p. 291).

Arguing against a language that collapses the friend into the same, Derrida speaks about the disparity between the self and the other with a distinguished and prevailing asymmetry among singularities. Honouring Kant for his critical and thematic rigour for respecting the other as an end, Derrida (2005b) states that “there is no friendship without the respect of the other” (p. 283). However, he contends that if we approach the other from the perspective of the self, we end up reducing the other to sameness; a replica of the self. This also explains why Derrida finds Aristotle’s concept of friendship which addresses the friend as an other self problematic. If one reduces the otherness of the friend to an other self, one would annihilate the utterly different other, violating his otherness. Derrida (2005b) suggests that the other should be approached as an “altogether other” (p. 232) (*tout autre est tout autre*) and treated and respected according to his uniqueness. Instead of being forced to assimilate the thoughts, beliefs and practices of others, the friend should be free to surprise us with his own distinctiveness. As Derrida (1995a) contends in *The Gift of Death*, the voice of the other should exceed all our expectations and all our conventional moral codes. Caputo (1999) observes that the very dissimilarity and distance of the friend compel us out of ourselves towards the friend in a futile pursuit to reach where we can never reach. “If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power” (Levinas, 1989, p. 51). As Dallmayr (1999) states, the infinite separation and disjunction between friends protect the other from being violated. This is the reason why Derrida (2005b) envisions a “community without community, friendship without the community of the friends of solitude. No appurtenance. Nor resemblance nor proximity” (p. 42). The alterity and individuality of the other should be responsibly safeguarded as long as we genuinely yearn for a non-violent communal living.

On reflecting on the full respect to alterity, Derrida points to the absence of the feminine other in conceiving friendship and the democratic polity. Throughout his discussion in *PF*, Derrida incessantly questions the absence of sisterhood in democratic discourses, referring to the superior masculinised traditional definition of friendship. The feminine is rendered completely absent in political texts and is assimilated and neutralised in the terminology of brotherhood. Furthermore, the very binding brotherly relations render friendship with and between women impossible. In this manner, the feminine other is subject to the law of fraternity, to “the brother who capitalizes everything” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 294). Derrida (2005b) refers to the letter written by Saint Francis of Assisi in which he “could not help but write to a nun: 'Dear Brother Jacqueline'” (p. 156). Longing for a language that does not discriminate or reduce the alterity of the feminine other, Derrida (2005b) maintains that the ‘brother’ is “more than one [...] more than one sex [...] each time unique” (p. 305). However, if brotherhood can equally refer to both male and female figures, the feminine would be assimilated and sisterhood annihilated or perhaps refer to a more “docile example of the concept of fraternity” (Derrida, 2005b, p. viii).

2.4.2 Hospitality

The language of brotherhood is evidently one of Derrida’s concerns in *PF* (refer to 1.3.3). The political consequence of such language is the formation of borders that form an exclusive community of friends which forcibly rejects or eliminates that which is identified as other. Derrida points to the negative connotations associated with those who are othered, rejected, displaced without any form of citizenship and security. Referring to Aristotle's idea that the number of friends should be limited, one wonders if he is correct in raising the issue of whether one can befriend all the living and the non-living alike. But Derrida (2005d) maintains that we can “extend it to the whole world of singularities, to the whole world of humans [...] or else, even further, to all nonhuman living beings, or again, even beyond that, to all the nonliving” (p. 53). Derrida reflects on the paradoxical nature of borders which excludes and segregates whilst making relations and friendship possible. “There is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity, but there is no democracy without the 'community of friends', without the calculation of majorities,

without identifiable, stabilizable, representable subjects, all equal. These two laws are irreducible one to the other. Tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 22). A democratic community needs to identify itself as different from other communities. However, in doing so it erects borders and walls for self-protection and preservation which wounds its democratic openness to others (Derrida, 2001; 2005d). Coupled by an increasingly individualistic culture and the urge to fulfil one's necessities and aspirations, it led humanity to an insensitive consciousness towards the appeal of others.

The possibilities of friendship, therefore, cannot be actualised without hospitality. Intrinsically, friendship entails the hosting of the guest, the friend, the other. "The social value of *phílos* is linked to hospitality. The guest is *phílos*. *Phileîn* is to 'hospitize'. *Phileîn*, *philótēs* imply the exchanged oath, *phílēma* the embrace hailing or welcoming the guest" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 98). Being open to others is a fundamental necessity for the arrival of the 'friendship to come'. The plea of a person to become a friend/guest can only be noticed and, consented to, when the other is approached with an open heart, an open door to one's home. The conditions for this unconditional openness towards others, as perceived by Derrida, provoke legitimate questions. Can our limitation support an unlimited number of friends? Are we ought to be utterly hospitable to the point of making ourselves vulnerable? Are we obliged to be vigilant to safeguard ourselves from a dangerous guest? Can we still be unintentionally violent on the friend in the same act of accepting him as our guest? Is unconditional hospitality "madness" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 50) after all?

The ethics of hospitality, as proposed by Derrida, refers to 'absolute' and 'pure' hospitality which demands the unconditional reception of the stranger irrespective of his identity and social baggage. The identity of the stranger at the door cannot be the barrier that prevents a hospitable encounter. Furthermore, hospitable encounters cannot be conditioned by some evaluation that seeks to grasp the identity of the other, as argued in 2.4.1.

Having said this, Derrida is not oblivious to the risks that unconditional hospitality may present. In fact, he admits that such openness might be deemed as complete 'madness' (Derrida, 2005b, p. 50). Putting oneself or the community in a vulnerable

position before the other may be considered imprudent and unethical. The act of unconditional hospitality goes far beyond the Kantian idea of accepting the newcomers as long as they live peacefully in their space without presenting any harm or threat to the host (Kant, 1996). Derrida calls for communities that are "pressed to a near breaking point, exposed to the danger of the noncommunal, communities that are porous and open-ended, putting their community and identity at risk" (Caputo, 1999, p. 187). Inspired by Levinas's ethical thoughts on the face to face encounters, Derrida's concept of hospitality is not only aimed to prevent exclusions but it solicits our unconditional welcoming, qua friendship, without expecting anything in return (Critchley & Bernasconi, 2004).

It is interesting how Derrida presents his ethics of hospitality without any horizon; an infinite welcome which can never be fulfilled. His claim on hospitality: "if there is such a thing and I am not sure that there is" (Derrida, 2002b, p. 71), reveals its impossibility. However, unconditional hospitality is only possible in its impossibility and becomes "an event" (Derrida, 2005a, p. 74) at the same moment one decides to act according to the conditions that are available. It is an infinite objective that keeps us in a constant state of progression, never satisfied or assured of the accomplishment of our aspirations. In other words, we can never claim that we are hospitable enough as there are always more appeals to respond to. "I cannot respond to the call [...] without sacrificing the other other [...] sacrificing whatever obliges me to also respond, in the same way, in the same instant, to all the others" (Derrida, 1995a, p. 68).

2.4.3 Responsibility and Freedom

Reciprocity is evidently one of the main notions of Aristotelian friendship which Derrida addresses at the same time as he seeks to persistently contest and resist. Friendship, based on agreements and laws which balance the profits generated by friendship between parties, tends to render friendship a rigid contract that rips it out of its incalculable and volatile nature. Derrida (2005b) thinks of unpredictable relations that are unrestricted by laws on how to act. He describes ethical friendships unregulated by agreements and motivated by the free will as "certainly more

beautiful" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 205). They are by nature open to disillusionment and grievances, and possibly painful experiences as they "count(s) on intention, will, and choice" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 205) of all parties. Friendship is given and offered as a gift provided by one's ability and will to respond to the other rather than to adhere to laws or to expect something in return. Responsibility comes into force when one's behaviour is not regulated or dictated by any form of agreement but as an invention or decision which Derrida (2005a) names as "the event" (p. 74).

The promise of the host, who is able to respond to the appeal of guests, is intimately tied to issues of freedom and law. Response-ability refers to the openness to the other, listening and attending to the demands of others whom one cannot completely get to know and whose plea can never be completely fulfilled. The answering or responding does not only presume the presence of the other in relation to the self but it also affirms the dissymmetry between the self and the other which urgently requests responsible actions. In view of this, Derrida (2005b) poses three interrelated modalities to address the appeal of the other: "*to answer for*, *to respond to*, *to answer before"* (p. 250). Despite his vision of a promising future, Derrida affirms that responsibility is the *here and now*; the ability to freely respond to the surprising appeal of the other.

According to Derrida (1988), this modality of *answering to* appears to be "more original, more fundamental, and hence unconditional" (p. 638) notwithstanding that all the three modalities "envelop and imply each other" (p. 638). One *answers to* "the question, the request, the prayer, the apostrophe, the call, the greeting or the sign, the adieu of the other" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 251). This *answering to* should respect the singularity of the other and address the concrete situation by listening to and understand, by being sensitive and by being compassionate to the other's cry. The response, and therefore, the action one performs, goes beyond the filter of *answering before* the law; a universalised code that commands and guides our actions. In *Life After Theory* (Payne & Schad, 2003), Derrida shows clearly that the voice of the friend may exceed conventional moral codes and so *answering before* the law may not suffice the "unforeseeable and incalculable coming of the other" (Derrida & Roudinesco, 2004, p. 50). Therefore, an adequate and effective response requires imputable actions which presuppose freedom from the law. *Answering for*

oneself implies the responsibility which one bears on his shoulder, on his own name, in the way one treats the other. Through these three modalities of responses, Derrida in *PF*, stresses that one's relation to the singularity of the other passes through the universality of the law which treats the others as equal and, at the same time, as commanding recognition of the transcendental alterity of the other which undermines/contradicts the very generality of the law. This tension between justice and law, singularity and universality, private and public, remains at the heart of friendship and proves that friendship is an ethical site of virtue and justice, moral reason and political reason. In following a prescribed rule, no decision in favour of the other is taken, and thus, no responsibility is shouldered. A *response to* the other, grounded within the encounter itself, reflects an ethics based on the context of the response which makes response-ability more meaningful. This is what Derrida (1992c) calls "experience and experiment of the possibility of the impossible" (p. 41). In other words, the aporetic nature of responsibility is evident in performing responsible actions which may follow systems of law but at the same time goes beyond them as an "impossible invention" (Derrida, 1992c, p. 41). Responsibility will remain haunted by the unexpected context of the event, retaining an absolute risk in every situation as if it were the first time. Derrida (2005b) questions: "When will we be ready for an experience of freedom and equality that is capable of respectfully experiencing that friendship, which would at last be just, just beyond the law, and measured up against its measurelessness?" (p. 306).

Laws are not enough to ensure a just response to a friend or other, for at times, following set-rules can still violate the friend or the other. Derrida's term 'justice to come', which is tied to a democracy to come, alludes to experiences of justice which go beyond duty and obligation. 'Friendship to come' as proposed by Derrida converges with Aristotle's (1983) statement that "the completest realization of justice seems to be the realization of friendship" (p. 252). However, Derrida unequivocally declared during multiple philosophical conversations that following moral codes would only make us legal but definitely not just before the face of the other. Friendship transcends the minimal obligation towards the other by spurring non-reciprocal actions without any form of calculation. According to Derrida, while justice can never happen absolutely outside the law, one cannot say that justice is served by the law. If justice is reduced to an effect of calculation vis-a-vis the law, it

becomes unquestionable and claims to be brought to the present. For Derrida, justice is always deferred, always keeping us waiting for a radical and absolute irreducible future. Indeed, Derrida advocates the deconstruction of law and events to solve present injustice and violence in pursuit of the undeconstructible justice of the future, the ‘justice to come’.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed Derrida’s alternative understanding of friendship which goes beyond reciprocity, equality and brotherhood that found democratic politics. One can conclude after reading *PF* that, for Derrida, the political consequences of friendship are indisputable and his aim is not to completely eliminate the implications of the notions of classical friendship but to rethink them in a manner that opens up the possibilities of deferring it. Derrida is concerned about the act of love of friendship which can intrinsically drive all democratic citizens to commit themselves to others through lovence. This new way of living together determined by friendship assures a promising future both for the individuals involved but even more promising for the community at large. Derrida perceives a friendship, that is more inclusive and open to all, of those who are encountered in their particular demanding circumstance and not just friends we have encountered previously or those we consider brothers. It is an unconditional responsibility towards others which surpasses kinship and affinity, referred to by Derrida (2005b) as the friendship “without heart” (p. 155) (refer to 2.3). The response to the demand of the other is never motivated by proximity or emotional ties but marked with unconditional openness beyond those that we consider equal or similar to us. This highlights Derrida’s notion of the being always ready *to respond to* the other indiscriminately and instantaneously.

Sustaining non-hierarchical differences would be the key to a promising democracy. Influenced by Levinas’s philosophy, Derrida thinks of a kind of friendship that demands respect for the otherness, singularity and responsibility instilled in us by the altogether other without being exclusive to the few whom we call friends or brothers. This friendship would contribute to a less violent community that embraces humanity

in all its heterogeneity. The gift of friendship would be offered to the other without any prospect of reciprocity and completely out of lovence and responsibility towards the other. This gift-giving quality ensures a higher type of friendship that the history and tradition of classical friendship are unable to fulfil. If every person responds to the call of the other as other with these advantageous attributes, we move towards a more hospitable and responsible community of friends. This vision is definitely not easy to attain and may be perceived as impossible. However, through the rethinking of who qualifies as friend, the experience of the ‘democracy to come’ becomes possible. The question remains: “When will we be ready for an experience of freedom and equality that is capable of respectfully experiencing that friendship, which would at last be just, just beyond the law, and measured up against its measurelessness?” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 306).

Chapter III

3 Friendship in the Ethics Curriculum

Following the discussion on Derrida's politics and ethics of friendship in Chapter II, I shall now explore some aspects of that discussion and its implications for the Ethics class within Maltese schools. The discussion will focus particularly on how Derrida's notion of friendship would deconstruct some conventional ways in which friendship is perceived to explore the ethical relations within the teaching of Ethics. As explained in my previous discussion, deconstruction does not seek to destruct existing ideas of friendship but to rethink it in a manner that would open up ideas as to how it can be conceived in alternative ways.

The philosophical literature which contemplates friendship in the school context based on the classical notion of friendship as postulated by Aristotle is abundant (Hoyos-Valdés, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2020; Ruehl, 2018; Sheffelton, 2012). Among others, Kristjánsson (2020) discusses character friendship as a method of moral education. He reflects on how friendship encourages the imitation of good attitudes and behaviour between friends, where one delights with the good habit of the other and considers him as a moral exemplar. "Friends sharpen each other and contribute towards collaborative moral growth, conducive to both individual and communal flourishing" (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 363). Similarly, Sherman (1999) discusses the cultivation of virtues in education as she deems Aristotle's ethics of virtues as significantly helpful to help children reflect on their emotions and judgements. Ruehl (2018) explains how friendship in schools, founded on equality and reciprocal benevolence, can create more humane classroom communities that accentuate each person's distinctive gift. Shuffelton (2012) even speaks about *philia* and the challenges and possibilities of teacher-student friendship. She argues that *philia* instils in students a disposition to learning and stimulates mutual moral growth even if this is ethically demanding on the teacher in keeping boundaries to sustain impartiality and conserve teacher authority. However, Shuffleton draws attention to

the importance of the active presence of the teacher to sustain the possibility of friendship with those whom we do not immediately consider friends.

The discussion in this chapter begins with a brief background on how Ethics was introduced in Maltese schools and give a general overview of its pedagogy and content. Then, what follows is an analysis of friendship within the existing Ethics class. It will show how the elements of commonality, love, reciprocity and virtue are the foundations of friendship supported in the existing Ethics programme. Elements of Aristotle's notions of friendship in the current Ethics programme will be rethought so as to envision a new and radical form of friendship in class.

3.1 Ethics Education in Schools

3.1.1 The Introduction of Ethics in Schools

The drastic changes in Malta's demography during the last decade poses several questions as to what the Maltese society actually is and how its cultural constitution is being transformed. What was once indisputably regarded as inherently Maltese, today is fluid and continually changing. One factor that contributed to the transformation of the Maltese community is the influx of the number of foreigners residing in Malta. In a decade, non-Maltese residents boosted from 4.1% (2008) to 16.9% (2018) of the whole population (N.S.O., 2019). Pace (2012) explains however that the main force that brought about significant change in Maltese society was the trend of secularisation. In spite of the high percentage of Maltese who claim to be Catholics, the influence of the Catholic teaching on the Maltese way of life has been slowly declining over the past years (Pace, 2012). According to Deguara (2020), the Maltese are adopting lifestyles that depart from the moral teaching of the Catholic church. What is particular to the Maltese society is the tension between the secular and the unsecular, as to many Maltese being a member of a "socio-religious community is still significant" (Deguara, 2020, p. 384). Giordmaina and Zammit (2019) explain that today's Maltese community differs from what used to be considered as traditionally Maltese and use the term 'new Maltese' to indicate those who do not identify to what is conventionally thought of as a Maltese identity.

This secular trend together with the number of foreign students in Maltese schools (9.7% in 2017 according to N.S.O.(2019)) resulted in having a good number of students who were opting out of the Catholic Religious Education (CRE) class without being offered an alternative subject by the school. In 2012, the current national curriculum, *A National Curriculum Framework for All* (2012) introduced a new subject called Ethics Education to address the increasingly multi-cultural reality in schools that cannot be ignored (Wain, 2016b). “For young people opting out of Catholic Religious Education, it [was] recommended that the Religious Education learning area will consist of an Ethical Education programme” (M.E.D.E., 2012, p. 36). Although Ethics Education features in the same curricula area as CRE in the *NCF*, the Ethics programme adopts a clear “secular non-denominational approach” (Giordmaina & Zammit, 2019, p. 258). In this regard, Wain (2016b) argues that it is strange “that while presenting them as alternative learning programmes it puts Religious Education and Ethics together in a common curriculum” (par. 3).

3.1.2 Pedagogy

The *NCF* (2012) states that Ethics Education was “preferred over a Comparative Religious Education programme” (M.E.D.E., 2012, p. 36) to be open to all students irrespective of their faith or religious background. The Ethics programme, rooted in the tradition of Western philosophy, maintains rationality as the core that animates human ethical behaviour (Zammit, 2019). The *Learning Outcomes Framework* (2015) states clearly that Ethics is more focused on the learning processes and outcomes of teaching Ethics rather than the teaching of moral doctrine or imperatives to which students are to adhere to. Ethics intends to develop mature citizens with a firm ethical character based on a set of ethical and political values which are recognised in principle in a democratic society. As Wain (2016a) in his article on the *Malta Independent* affirms, the virtues and skills promoted in Ethics Education “are obviously also democratic besides being ethical”. The Ethics programme indicates key values (such as justice, solidarity, respect) that help each learner develop a character that is competent in making responsible moral judgements (Wain, 2014). Ethics “helps the learner develop an ethical sense of caring for oneself and others based on practical wisdom in conducting one’s

personal life and one's life with others" (D.Q.S.E., 2015, p. 28). With the help of imagination and reason, learners start exploring, reflecting and analysing situations that will facilitate the progress of their personal and social ethical journey. In order to reach such learning outcomes, the Ethics programme adopts a specific pedagogy based on Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) (D.Q.S.E., 2015).

Teaching philosophy to students in compulsory education, particularly to children at the primary level, may sound unnecessary to the general public (Murris, 2000). Due to misconceptions about philosophy and particularly its association with abstract thinking, some may think that philosophy goes beyond the intellectual abilities of compulsory education students (Lipman, 2003). The P4C's programme developed by Matthew Lipman, nevertheless, targets compulsory school students with the stimulation of questioning, reasoning and independent learning skills. "P4C aims to help children become more thoughtful, more reflective, considerate and reasonable individuals." (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 15) The P4C class promotes inquisitive and critical thinking by bringing out aspects that are "unsettled and problematic in order to capture the laggard attention of the students and to stimulate them to form a community of inquiry" (Lipman, 2003, p. 21). This approach to teaching and learning challenges the mistaken perception that education is just a mechanical process of the transmission of knowledge without nurturing students' open-mindedness (Murris, 1997).

A community of inquiry stimulates students for self-reflection and compels them to come up with questions to generate new ideas and understanding. With the help of the teacher, different and conflicting views are brought forth so that students manage to question their convictions and to analyse alternative views to acquire a better understanding (Murris, 1997). The aim of the community of inquiry is to question the way one thinks and to cultivate the ability to reflect and analyse. Through this collaborative learning process, students "are compelled to reflect, to concentrate, to consider alternatives, to listen closely, to give careful attention to definitions and meanings, to recognize previously unthought-of options" (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 22). As Murris (1997) posits, members of the community of inquiry are willing to change their reasoning if through dialogue their ideas turn out to be flawed. Sharp asserts that the community of inquiry shall "cultivate an intellectual and social virtue, to bring

about the transformation of persons into more reasonable individuals committed to the creation of a reasonable world" (SAPERE, 2010, p. 16). The P4C programme was Lipman's reactive response to the lack of essential critical thinking skills he noticed in his students (Garcia-Moriyon et al., 2005). His proposal sustains Dewey's philosophy who argues "that schools should be participatory communities, a meaningful part of society where young people could develop as citizens" (Haynes, 2002, p. 46). Inquiring skills is essential for the foundation of a healthy democracy and thus, the community of inquiry nurtures autonomous reflective individuals who can dialogue with others, respect their different opinions and be able to live harmoniously together (Haynes, 2002).

The same objectives of the community of inquiry are applied for the teaching of Ethics in Maltese schools. Teaching Ethics is also politically intended to nurture active and critical citizens who can articulate their thoughts, problematise issues, analyse critically and listen to others (D.Q.S.E., 2015). In contrast to the CRE class, which aims to teach morality from the perspective of the Catholic religion, the Ethics class aims to create a collaborative learning environment setup on the appreciation of diverse values (Giordmaina & Zammit, 2019). Hence, it caters for students with different cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and ability (M.E.D.E., 2012). This is the reason why Wain (2016a) refers to the Ethics class as a democratic community that applies its ethical values in its way of life. Ethics students "commit themselves [...] to democratic practice" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 11).

3.1.3 The Programme and Assessment of Ethics Curriculum

The learning process in Ethics Education occurs progressively in a spiral manner throughout the educational years which corresponds to the cognitive, emotional and social growth of the student (Wain, 2014). Different themes, issues and concepts are revisited at different stages to help the participants to develop "mature and informed moral judgements" (Caruana et al., 2015, par. 7) that will ultimately lead them to question their moral values rather than believing in them dogmatically and without reason.

The Ethics programme states that the initial steps to form a community of inquiry are to be taken up from the very first lessons in Ethics Education (D.L.A.P., 2018). Throughout primary school years, it tries to establish a community of children who speaks honestly, listens to others attentively and discusses shared narratives with others. The Ethics programme focuses on the exploration of self-identity and the importance of socialising with others. Students are assisted in becoming more aware of the spectrum of diversity in the community and to recognise and respect others as unique persons “deserving special moral consideration” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 5). Students are also sensitised to respect and be responsible for the world, “its physical and natural environment, including of the animals and other forms of life in it” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 6). The primary years programme helps students to reflect on the formation of a community and “to identify what is shared in a community, namely common purposes and interests, communication and ways of acting together and regarding each other marked by the values of loyalty, solidarity or support for each other” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). It also identifies what is considered anti-social behaviour (ex. bullying, teasing, physical harm to others) to help students commit themselves against such behaviour. The programme attempts to develop the Ethics class as a “community of friends who owe one another the attitudes and behaviour of friendship” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). In developing a sense of community within the class, the programme aims to facilitate a flourishing way of living together both in class and beyond.

In middle and secondary schools, students are directed to more sophisticated and higher-order thinking. The processes of analysing, synthesising and evaluating improve the learners logical thinking and consolidate their ability to articulate and communicate effectively their thoughts. During Ethics lessons, participants engage in discussions that help in considering the ethical issues involved and to predict and analyse the consequences of particular decisions on the individuals concerned, on the community and even on the environment. The Ethics teacher facilitates these discussions and helps students to reflect and come to their own judgements without imposition. As stated by Fowler (1995), students at this age, start thinking outside of the box and take into account different perspectives to form their thoughts and opinions. In becoming critical thinkers, young people may be judged as rebellious but actually, they are moving forward in transforming themselves in relation to others

and build their moral character. To facilitate this process, the Ethics programme puts forward questions that “enable a more sophisticated discussion of the question ‘Who am I?’”(D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). The programme introduces the students to “self-reflection, of living the examined life, and ultimately of self-mastery” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). As the Ethics curriculum suggests, one has to refer to some moral law or authority on which one is to direct his life (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 6). This growing process towards mature adulthood aims for the cultivation of moral responsibility and “the importance of responsible life-choices” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). The Ethics programme introduces students to the ethics of care and dependence to instil in students ethical sensibility and commitment towards others: “The principle of reciprocity, the ethics of giving and receiving, which arises from the relations of mutual dependence that mark our human condition” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 10). During the last couple of years of secondary education, students are encouraged to explore different interpretations of the sanctity and value of life. War, capital punishment, euthanasia, and abortion are among the controversial issues that would be discussed in the Ethics class. At this age, students are mature enough to deal with sensitive issues which they may have already experienced or will eventually come across in their lives (Grech, 2017; Wain, 2016a). Ultimately, the Ethics programme aims to help students develop into responsible and ethical citizens “in a European westernized set of values” (Giordmaina & Zammit, 2019 p. 261).

Assessment of the learning of Ethics Education is based on the learning outcomes framework (D.Q.S.E., 2015). Continuous assessment along the scholastic year informs and directs the teaching and learning of Ethics towards what the student “is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of a process of learning” (D.Q.S.E., 2015, p. 7). This recently adopted approach to assessment gives way to more flexible and creative teaching methods so as to better address the learning needs of the students. With regard to summative assessment, the objective is not “the memorisation of endless lists or the regurgitation of facts, and the whole point of the assessment is to evaluate the student’s thinking skills” (Zammit, 2019, p. 12). Thus, students are allowed to apply their critical thinking skills and to freely express their opinions. Reflective writing (journal) and activity-based assessments (projects, portfolio) which are performed during the scholastic year contribute to a substantial percentage (60%) of the end-of-year mark. The remaining percentage is attained by

the final written exam. Although, assessment is a form of accreditation of one's academic achievement, what is more meaningful is the support it offers to students to evaluate the development of their ethical character.

3.2 The Friendship supported in the Ethics Class

The published literature that pertains to the teaching of Ethics in Maltese schools, shows that the Ethics class is grounded in the practice of a community of inquiry as explained in 3.1.2. However, Wain in an online article describes the Ethics class not only as a community of inquiry but also as a community of friends:

> A community of inquiry is one that values discussion, dialogue, debate, the exchange of ideas and outlooks in a social environment which is free and safe and where participants feel that they and their views are respected; it is therefore a community of friends. (Wain, 2016a, par. 4)

One can understand how a community of inquiry can also be a community of friends. However, this idea of a community of friends is not an elaborated one. One particular module in the early years curriculum refers to the moral community as "a community of friends with rights and obligations" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). As explained, the community of inquiry method itself refers to the ethical practice of relating to others, of learning from and with them. Discussion and debate are central to the inquiry within this community which means that rights and obligations are critically analysed. Yet, the question of how a community of inquiry within the Ethics class can also be friends with another community is not raised.

Essential elements in the Ethics programme reveal that the community of friends promoted in the programme is more in line with the Aristotelian notion of friendship. As explained in chapter I, Aristotle's canonical concept of friendship in *NE,* is founded on the idea of brotherhood, implying commonality and equality between friends. True friendship for Aristotle is based on the practice of virtues that friends must have to make friendship last. The language of the other self is also a characteristic of Aristotle's concept of friendship and underlines reciprocity and

proximity between friends (refer to 1.1). I shall critically discuss these aspects in the light of the Derridean notion of friendship discussed earlier.

3.2.1 A Definite Concept of Friendship

One issue that is immediately evident in the Ethics programme is that it tries to encapsulate the concept of friendship in a nutshell, to use Derrida's words. The Ethics programme states that "children are led to explore the notion of a friend as someone who, in general terms, means one well and whom one trusts, feels familiar with, and experiences affection for" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). It also asks students about "how they would describe a friend, what his or her qualities would be. Their answers are collected, listed, and collected together by the teacher to create a rough composite picture of a friend and of the qualities of friendship" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) around which discussions revolve. One issue with this method is that it tries to capture some essence of what friendship entails even though these concepts are derived from the varying subjective experiences and ideas of students themselves and are open to questions. What grounds and animates the discussion are the rational arguments that students bring to their varying ideas. Derrida's deconstruction of friendship entails a different approach. Its aim is not to achieve some end to a discussion on friendship but to crack usual and taken for granted ideas open. This will lead one to question the ethical grounds on which friendship is usually understood beyond rational thought.

The Ethics programme makes use of Socratic questioning to encourage critical inquiry by students (Zammit, 2019). It also makes use of critical thinking methods for students to problematise their ideas about friendship. It seeks to engage students in a collaborative reflective dialogue about friendship using logical and rational thinking. As Haynes (2002) explains, the community of inquiry encourages students "to think logically, critically and creatively, to reason and reflect, and to deliberate with an open-minded disposition" (p. 12). Critical thinking aims to actively generate concepts, construct arguments in rational and logical ways (Murris, 2000). Kennedy (2012) explains that the community of inquiry "is traditional Aristotelian, a logic of classes based on the three classical laws of thought - identity, contradiction, and the

excluded middle” (p. 41). Derrida’s deconstruction differs from critical thinking as Aristotle conceives it, where one tries to think critically about friendship with reference to the criteria of brotherhood, reciprocity and sameness. One can identify other forms of critical thinking by the Ethics class. It reflects for example the educational aspects of the enlightenment rationality aimed towards “man's release from his self-incurred tutelage [...] man's inability to make use of his understanding” (Kant, 1997, p. 7). Such educational project encourages students to think in order to become autonomous from any doctrine or socially established knowledge. One can also identify the Habermasian community of communication which requires that those within a community use a common language necessary for argumentation.

Deconstruction, however, is a form of critical thinking that focuses on the meaning of concepts using the concept of différance as it seeks to explore what is still undiscovered in friendship. It goes beyond inherited elements that limit our usual understanding of friendship. Deconstruction of friendship seeks to transcend all limits in an unprecedented way. It does not refer to rational criteria of friendship to decipher whether one is a friend or an enemy; neither does it necessitate the use of a common language to argue for or against socially held understandings of what it is to be a friend. It challenges the structuralist approach that keeps friendship fixed to its foundations. As Biesta and Geert (2001) argue, deconstruction takes critical thinking “one step ‘forward’” (p. 65) through différance (as discussed in 1.3). It stays with the paradoxical tension between friend and enemy so that the friend is understood in relation to what it is not; the enemy. This throws light on how friendship is usually conceived, that is, by the exclusion of those who are identified as enemies. Deconstructive thinking, therefore, exposes the exclusionary tactics of forms of thought that can never consider an enemy as a friend, excluding possibilities of an encounter with the enemy. The deconstructive process always leads to a provisional understanding that differs from the old concept and remains postponed towards “an indefinite perfectibility, …every time in the singular urgency of a here and now” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 105). Hence, deconstruction provides a constant exploration of possibilities that leads to the questioning of the very idea of friends within the Ethics class and contributes to a deeper articulation of a community of friends.

3.2.2 Love

Love in the current Ethics programme is considered as the natural emotion of the heart which attracts us close to others. The friend is described as “someone who, in general terms [...] experiences affection for” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). The basis of friendship, similar to Aristotle, is love. Love and friendship in Aristotelian language intertwine as if they are a single concept. In fact, the two chapters in *NE* on friendship are named: *Friendship or Love*; affirming that, for Aristotle, there is no distinction between the two virtues. Love for others in friendship starts with self-love, which is described as “natural and good” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). Self-love makes it possible to reach out to others to whom we mean well and offer our help and care. Although the programme contemplates unconditional love, ethical issues arise when students are asked, for example, to identify those who deserve or qualifies for their love. Most probably, the Ethics programme speaks of different treatment towards friends and strangers and that intimacy is only for close and special friends and not to strangers, to safeguard children from harm and abuse. However, the question of who is entitled to our love and who is not worthy of it remains significant and can, through Derrida’s thought, be reconceived.

The Ethics programme speaks of different kinds of friendship that imply different levels of commitment according to their proximity. It seeks “to explore the notions of friend, special friend, acquaintance, stranger [and] to instil a better understanding in children of the differences” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) between these categories. The idea of having special friends, friends and strangers correspond to the three kinds of Aristotelian friendship (virtue, pleasure and utility). This uses a language that separates those that can be included as friends and excluded as others. Love in this sense may be limited to a restricted number of people. This distinction between special friends, friends and acquaintances underlines that close friends deserve our attention more than others and that strangers are the least privileged. So, if the stranger is regarded as the last one who deserves our response, then what should our response towards the enemy be? It is important to note at this point that the Ethics programme never mentions the enemy by name. Nor does it contemplate a way of living or dealing with situations where the stranger can be considered as a friend or when a friend turns out to be an enemy and if love remains possible.

Indirectly, the enemy is referred to in sporadic instances when dealing with forgiveness in early primary years and the resistance to violent behaviour (such as bullying). Hence, the question is: why is the figure of the enemy in the programme ignored? What is at stake in losing the figure of the enemy in the Ethics class shall be explored in 4.3.

3.2.3 Brotherhood

The politics underlying the introduction of the Ethics programme in schools is motivated by the intent of creating a community for those who did not fit the pre-established community of CRE (refer to 3.1.1). It was intended to create a place for those who do not share the values of the Christian community and their right to be educated within a different value system that has been historically othered. Both communities, however, have been created with a particular albeit different communal grounds. CRE grounds the ties between friends as brothers on its conviction that we are all sons of God the Father. The Ethics community does not explicitly envisage brotherhood in this manner especially because of its non-denominational approach. This refers to those who do not hold any particular religious beliefs or/and it pertains to those of a wide-ranging set of religious beliefs. Wain (2016b) argues that the Ethics community can bring together those who identify with a particular faith and also those with “secular ethical outlooks, even atheistic” (par. 4). It is evident that the Ethics community envisages relations between persons beyond one value system, and therefore, is open to differences. Yet, underlying the Ethics class is a conception of democratic brotherhood. As explained in 1.3.3, the brotherly relations within a democratic community assumes fraternal similarities which are related to democratic citizenship. The community of inquiry in the teaching of Ethics is democratic in that it welcomes different ideas and values of the persons that partake in it and, therefore, is open to changes according to their active participation within the group. Nevertheless, as a community of inquiry, it is unified by its demand for rationality and individual autonomy and demands democratic brotherhood.

One important aspect in establishing the Ethics class is that students who are excluded from the CRE form a new community that automatically excludes those in

CRE. The community of friends within the Ethics class is held together by a common democratic rationale that identifies them as brothers; even though it does not demand brothers to be exactly the same or have the same father. The very politics of bringing together those students who were refusing CRE in schools, however, creates divergences between two communities that instigate allegiances to different communities that automatically exclude each other. Being a member of both communities is not possible, so one has to choose and parents are given the right to choose their child's association with one particular community. This leads to the creation of a separate community of Ethics students, bound by their sameness in not being part of CRE. What unifies them is the identification with particular secular rationality and particular democratic values that have been established by the Ethics curriculum. Their identity, which Giordmaina and Zammit (2019) identify as the new Maltese, necessitates the unification of multiple singularities into a group that homogenously identifies itself as new Maltese. Inadvertently, this has contributed to the formation of counter communities, at times, even demonstrating hostility towards each other. The existence of these two communities relies on the separation of one from the other, leading to the situation where possibilities of communication and to a lesser extent friendship between them have become very difficult.

3.2.4 Commonality

The Ethics programme states that "communities are people who share common purposes, who communicate together and share a moral and political language, and who recognise the authority of a common set of rules and norms of behaviour" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 5). This statement shows that the commonality established through rational and secular values through the Ethics class is not unlike the Aristotelian notion of similar brothers united together for a common objective that presumes commonality, consensus and unity between friends. As Haddad (2013) explains the concept of brotherhood that implies unity between people infers that what separates each individual can be overcome and assimilated in commonality. Friendship within the Ethics class, perceived as made up of one body, runs the dangers of a politics of assimilation, which although transformative, in the sense that the community is open to change to accommodate differences, does not entertain

the possibility of welcoming those who might not want to identify themselves as new Maltese. These still are expected to share the values to assimilate within the new Maltese Ethics community. There is also the question of how the values of the new Maltese community are to be established and who has the power to establish them. The other pertinent question refers to the kind of ethical relations that could exist between those who do not share the common values of the Ethics community. What if the other is completely different and has nothing in common with the group? Can the Ethics class transcend commonality to genuinely and radically welcome different others?

Notwithstanding that the Ethics programme presents the school and the society "as a community of different communities" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 5) it speaks of a degree of commonality that "distinguishes us from others and renders us profoundly different from them" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 5). This thought implicates that despite personal differences, the commonality within the Ethics class consequently separates them from others. In sustaining this ideology of common fundamental beliefs, purposes, and allegiances, the Ethics programme, as Mizzi and Mercieca (2020) maintain, "becomes a tool to perpetuate a Eurocentric cultural hegemony" (p. 12).

The Ethics class greets its members on the condition to adhere to the predetermined values and laws of democracy identified before the very initial encounter with others. Apart from privileging the western way of life as a condition for friendship, the Ethics class presumes that friendship within the class is possible because of the shared universal principles that result from rationality as argued above. The supported language of rationality is explicitly encouraged and preferred in the Ethics programme as it intends "to distinguish between opinion which is reasoned, supported with fact and argument, and gratuitous or unsupported opinion – with the object of encouraging the first" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). This renders the Ethics class as a community of those who share a common language that "implicates the laws and theories of rational discourse" (Lingis, 1994, p. 110).

In *The Politics,* Aristotle (1981) states, that rules and laws are crucial in guiding the democratic lives of persons as it does not come naturally. However, laws by themselves are not enough to guarantee the best democratic life. Citizens need

practical (*phronêsis*) and theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) to regulate their desires in line with the law (Aristotle, 1981). Thus, Aristotle emphasises the political role of education and indicates it as the main resource that ensures the survival of democracy. Education, according to Aristotle, is the process of helping the young acquire the necessary habits for the constitution and to endorse the common objectives of the society. Aristotle advocates education for all because he decisively states that just as it is for an individual to be morally weak to live democracy, it is the same with the whole state. Hence, he envisions an equally accessible educational system that forms the character to be able to comply with a system of laws. This is why Aristotle (1981) insists that education should be in sync with the constitution so as "to maintain constitutional stability" (p. 331), that is, nurturing a way of living in accordance with the democratic rules of fraternity, liberty, equality and justice. The democratic community enjoys sovereignty and thus, is able to set its system of rules and laws that are equally forced on every citizen. Equality in democracy ensures the best conditions for the fulfilment of its citizens whereby they enjoy the freedom of living their desired way of life in a framework of justice that safeguards others and the common interest of the whole community. As argued in 1.1.6, the Ethics programme reflects Aristotle's understanding of democracy grounded in a demand to share common democratic interests. Furthermore, it reflects the Aristotelian practical wisdom that aims for the formation of character as required in a democratic association (Wain, 2014). It educates students "to adopt and cultivate good habits so that they become intrinsic to our practice of freedom" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 8) in a democratic way of life.

Derrida's notion of democracy is different in that it does not proceed on previously agreed terms except the invitation to respond to others. It is a 'democracy to come' as it invites us to consider a community of those who have nothing in common. A community "without resemblance" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 155) that interrupts the language of commonality and accommodates the strangeness of each person. This vision of a community of those who have nothing in common sustains the unconditional openness that ensures the uniqueness of every individual. It also opens possibilities of encountering others who have little or nothing in common with the Ethics class.

3.2.5 Virtue

The *NCF* (2012) states clearly that the Ethics programme aims for the formation of students in universal virtues, including friendship. Portraying the man of virtue as "the better man for our model" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 315) reflects specific ethical and political behaviour that determines a particular identity associated with a friend. In "socializing students into the key virtues" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Intro. Sec. Prog.), the Ethics programme tries to identify universal virtues and their characteristics in order to live a good life. "Loyalty, truthfulness, respect, sensitivity to the needs of others, solidarity, help" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) are among the highlighted virtues that are portrayed as mandatory qualities of the figure of the friend. This is to be achieved in living one's life in conformity "with the virtue of moderation described by the principle of the golden mean" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 10). The cultivation of this Aristotelian virtue is a necessary condition for friendship within the Ethics community of friends. It is considered essential for the betterment of one's life and for the possibility of living a thriving life with others. This accentuates Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*; "namely as an overall state of general well-being conforming with the virtue of moderation" (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 10). The virtue of friendship, as described by the Ethics programme, tends to lead to perfection and self-fulfilment of each individual in a democratic community and is clearly different from the ongoing ethical relations developed through encounters even with non-democratic 'strangers'.

3.2.6 The Other Self

The language of virtue as a system of qualities of a friend reduces the figure of the friend to a predefined concept (refer to 3.2.1). A person is identified as a friend as long as he complies with the present concept of friendship as presented through discussions within the Ethics class. This corresponds with Aristotle's (1983) statement, that the friend "moulds himself to the likeness of that which he approves in the other" (p. 317). This kind of relationship that contributes to the likeness between friends, led Aristotle to speak of the friend as the other self (refer to 1.1.3). This idea, of identifying a friend as long as one is similar to you, erects borders and increases hostility towards the different other. It is ethically problematic as it does not

envisage the friend as a distinct other so that, as Derrida argues, the be-friended becomes assimilated in the person of the friend. The claim for difference and the right to distinguish oneself as unique, advocated by the same Ethics programme, is in tension with the concept of other self that implies sameness in terms of virtue.

3.2.7 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is another Aristotelian element of friendship that is fostered in the existing Ethics class. One of the objectives that the Ethics programme seeks to achieve is the cultivation of a “special kind of sharing, a notion which is given special importance and explored in some depth” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). The principle of reciprocity in friendship transpires in the promotion of “sharing of things, experiences, and activities together” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) between friends. Maintaining that all humans are born vulnerable and that no one is completely self-sufficient, the programme introduces the concept of mutual dependence and promotes the idea of negotiation and the economy of resources. Aristotle (1983) advocates mutual support and solidarity between individuals as he argues that human beings are political animals requiring a social life. This social association “contributes to the good life of each [...] their chief end, both communally and individually” (Aristotle, 1981, p. 187). Attuned with this premise, the Ethics programme portrays the principle of reciprocity as the safeguard of “the general well-being of society or the common good” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 10). This mode of living together instils a sense of trust, fairness and justice between citizens. What one provides to the other is intended to be repaid to maintain an equilibrium and ensures mutual help and solidarity. For what is received, one is “in turn obliged to contribute” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9) to the flourishing and well-being of others. The Ethics programme even sustains that ‘giving and taking’ intensifies intimacy and draws friends closer. What is ethically problematic is that the programme promotes a “special kind of sharing that does not exist with ordinary friends” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) but only with special and close ones. This reiterates what was discussed in 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, that is, identifying and privileging special friends whilst distancing others. This Aristotelian condition of mutual sharing in friendship, presented as a necessary condition for friendship in the existing Ethics programme, can be

rethought in terms of the Derridean critique of conditional hospitality as well as a circular economy of exchange that reconceives gift-giving as expecting nothing back in return (refer to 4.2).

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the elements of friendship that are present in the existing Ethics programme and concludes that the programme is grounded in Aristotelian concepts. It argues for democratic arrangements that go beyond those who identify themselves within a particular community. Although the Ethics class can include different others, these need to refer to the language of rationality to be able to participate in it. It proposes a deconstructive approach to friendship that responds to others whom we do not identify as friends, shifting the grounds of democratic encounters beyond the Ethics community of friends. This ability to respond to others as others invites an alternative politics and ethics of friendship which is dynamic and in continuous exploration of open and unpredictable possibilities.

Chapter IV

4 An Alternative Friendship by the Ethics Class

Derrida's problematisation of Aristotelian notions of friendship invites us to think about how his politics of friendship can inform pedagogies in the Ethics class. His understanding of a democracy that is yet to come and not completely defined by laws of a rational community, opens possibilities for teaching Ethics through a pedagogy that responds to the other as other; not bound to some definitive political and ethical comportment of democratic citizens in a nation-state. Drawing on Derrida's deconstructive thinking about the community of friends, I shall continue to explore the possibilities of open student relations beyond the Ethics class. This calls for a politics and ethics of friendship that builds on encounters with unique and different others rather than part of a unified community. This will lead me to elaborate on the possibilities of the Ethics class in becoming a community of friends which is not bound by democratic brotherhood but which is open to those outside it and are ethically 'response-able' to them.

The discussion indicates how a radically open concept of friendship would present the possibility of unconditional hospitality that respects the absolute alterity of a friend. Central to the discussion is the friend-enemy aporia and the possibilities it presents to the Ethics community of friends. How would the figure of the 'enemy' in the Ethics class contribute to the exploration of an alternative meaning of friendship in a democracy? What are the risks of openness to an unknown enemy as a possible friend that endanger the democratic grounds of the Ethics community? I draw on Derrida's idea of lovence and reflect on the benefits it presents to the Ethics community of friends and its implications on democratic life which is yet to come.

Aristotle's idea of the friend as an other self, who is intimately attached to the other and by whom one is delighted, restricts the possibility of having a radically open possibility of friendship with those who do not partake within socially established groups of friends. Derrida, on the other hand, reconsiders the conventional concept

of friendship to extend the possibility of friendship to enemies. The Ethics class, who is already vigilant not to “fall in the trap of indoctrination” (Zammit, 2019, p. 10) can draw on Derrida’s concept of différance. This would entail a disposition to discover new ways to relate to others as friends. The question ‘who is a friend?’ remains unpredictable as it depends on unexpected encounters with strangers who challenge preconceived identification of human beings as strangers. The challenge is to suggest how this kind of friendship is possible through the teaching of Ethics which leads to an exploration of friendship that contributes to ethical education.

4.1 Lovence

The discussion on the concept of love towards friends, in 3.2.2, makes us reflect on how the Ethics class can envision a love that transcends exclusivity and brotherhood. Drawing on Derrida’s neologism of lovence, discussed in 2.3, this section reflects on how the Ethics class can support a more open and radical friendship. Lovence is a moral emotion between friends which enables the possibility of love for humanity that surpasses the specificity of elected friends. To Derrida (2005b), lovence is a concept that separates the classical concepts of love and friendship and that transcends them in the pursuit of an “always anew” (p. 14) and “remains to come” (p. 306) experience. For the Ethics class to open up for a new and radical possibility of friendship, it has to shift from what defines the friend (as discussed in 3.2.1) to the singular being (who) of the friend. Instead of categorically describing what is a friend or how friendship should or could be, the Ethics class can be more proactive in practical encounters with others in friendship. Lovence transcends love because it goes beyond any definition and “identification” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 65) of the other. Lovence stimulates the community of friends to a new friendship that is offered to the other irrespective of what the other possesses (Derrida, 2005b). The discussion of what is a friend, that draws on the student’s own experiences of friendship as suggested by the Ethics programme, may compel students to critically reflect on the social conditions that define friendship. However, real encounters with others, provide concrete opportunities for meeting others as others and for actively loving others in their absolute singularity or strangeness. One delights with who the friend is (the self), rather than be content with evaluating

varying concepts of friendship. In the Ethics class, friendship should be more about the performative force of encountering and speaking to persons as friends than simply speaking of others as friends. This implies that the community of friends in the Ethics class reflects on its own limits in providing the unconditional love and appreciation of singular and irreplaceable beings.

4.2 Aneconomic Friendship

Derrida (2005b) stretches friendship “to the extreme limit of its possibilities” (p. 13) by conceiving the possibility of friendship without reciprocal benevolence. Reciprocity is problematised by Derrida to accentuate the disproportionality sustained by lovence where friendship is offered without thinking or expecting to be loved in return: what he calls an aneconomic friendship. Friendship based on lovence is friendship “without presence, loving at a distance, in withdrawal, in separation” (Saghafi, 2018, p. 153). A politics and ethics of lovence acquaints the Ethics community of friends with unthought-of and unexpected possibilities as it deconstructs its logic of “giving and taking” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). The programme sustains that “in return for what the community gives us [...] we are in turn obliged to contribute to its flourishing” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 9). This negotiation is identified as “a sign of friendship” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2) and promotes “a special kind of sharing that does not exist with ordinary friends” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 2). However, in adopting a Derridean politics of friendship grounded in lovence, the Ethics class can envisage friendship as a gift that does not expect anything in return. This “rupture in reciprocity or equality” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 62) would transcend the logic of brotherhood in the class (as discussed above in 3.2.3) and opens the class to unconditional hospitality that shall be discussed later on in 4.3. Friendship offered as a gift, beyond reciprocity, makes possible impossible friendships, namely friendship between dissimilar, asymmetrical and unequal friends. Aneconomic friendship does not only surpass the obligations identified by the Ethics programme (refer to 3.2.7) but overcomes the problem of calculation that confines friendship to a limited number of people (refer to 1.1.4).

What is also interesting to note is that Derrida (2005b), in *PF*, posits that lovence is friendship given in distance so as to overcome the “lust of new possession” (p. 65). In *PF*, Derrida advocates the economy of the gift as a replacement to an economy of exchange. Exchange implies both an exchange of friendship: “I love you, love me, I will love you, let us exchange this promise” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 244) and also a compensation of the benefits received. Derrida interrupts such economy of exchange that renders others as sources of self-satisfaction who provide me with what I desire most, ie. love or the pleasure of compatibility. Derrida (2005b) acknowledges the challenges posed by this logic of gratuity as loving and friendship easily tend to “possession” and “appropriation” (p. 65). He states that friends might be considered as good things one possesses by right for his betterment. Even Aristotle (1983) admits that even if one acts for the other’s sake in perfect friendship, a lust of gratification remains. In *Points* (1995b), Derrida admits that love tends to be narcissistic and accepts the loved one on the terms of the loving one. Nevertheless, as human beings, it is through narcissistic love that we can reach out to the other and engage in friendship that goes beyond this paradigm of exchange. The condition of possibility for a “genuine and authentic act of friendship” (Blum, 1994, p. 112) remains the offering of friendship as a non-reciprocal gift; an infinite disproportion of giving without receiving. Aneconomic gift of love and friendship would be a qualitative leap towards relations that go beyond mutuality and brotherhood and the friend/enemy dichotomy. These radical relations provide an education in Ethics that aims to enhance the plurality of democratic living, reducing hostile encounters with others.

4.3 Greeting the Other

Derrida’s notion of lovence, which transcends the limits of reciprocity, brotherhood and community, is related to the notion of unconditional hospitality within an environment that instigates relationships with strangers; those that are not considered part of the community. On reflecting on the implications of this view to the teaching of Ethics in Malta, several questions arise regarding the possibility/impossibility of creating hospitable environments in schools. Can the community of Ethics enhance hospitable environments within schools? Mizzi and

Mercieca (2020) reflect on how the dynamics of the Ethics class may reinforce othering instead of hospitality. Even if the teaching of Ethics supports the idea of identifying others as ‘new’ Maltese and welcomes them within the Ethics class, there is little attempt to extend friendship to those who do not belong to it. This points to the need to reflect on the “opening, exposure, expansion, and complexification” (Caputo, 1997, p. 31) of the Ethics community to be able to encounter others who are not usually considered as guests. These include those who are considered enemies due to the logistic separation of students in CRE and Ethics classes.

In *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility* (2002b), Derrida indicates the paradoxical aspect of hospitable environments. A hospitable space presupposes limits and boundaries that identify the space controlled by the host and secures his authoritative position. The host can meet the stranger at the door as long as he is the owner of the house (refer to 2.4.2). The Ethics class is also wounded by this aporetic dimension (refer to 1.5). One main issue is that the Ethics community of friends is established within confined borders which segregate its members from outsiders/others. As already mentioned in 3.2.3, the Ethics class provides a hospitable place for those who are marginalised and forgotten due to their incongruity with the beliefs and values of the CRE class. However, its very setup marks the boundaries between the two communities which at times have induced unwanted hostilities. One has to note that these groups of students are only separated during timetable slot of CRE and Ethics Education lessons which take place at the same time in separate groups. As I will argue later about the possibilities of friendship that go beyond those who identify themselves as similar, the possibility of ethical relations between the two diverse clusters should be addressed; mostly because, as I have argued before, the teaching of Ethics should practically engage in enhancing and opening relations with others not considered part of the community of friends in the Ethics class.

Considering the dominant Catholic orientation of Maltese public schools, evident through the various religious rituals that take place during the day and the scholastic year, one has to consider the frequent marginalisation and othering of students within the Ethics class. There are instances where the students, who are placed within the community of the Ethics class after opting out of the CRE, are considered

strange, irregular and othered by the school community. One can understand the logistical reason for separating the two classes which is also necessary to avoid the assimilation of differing communities. This, of course, does not mean that hospitable encounters between these communities should not be encouraged. Derrida's proposition of adopting a 'logic of without' in *PF* makes it possible that the two communities can welcome and engage in a relationship with others beyond brotherhood. This would be a "community without community [...] no appurtenance [...] nor resemblance nor proximity" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 42). Unconditional openness transcends the culture of walls and boundaries between classes for diverse groups to approach each other. Hospitality opens the school to "undreamt-of possibilities" (Caputo, 1997, p. 31) of treating the other as a privileged guest and friend. Derrida (1999) recommends that we make use of the logic of the advance, that is, to call to mind that "the one who welcomes is first welcomed in his own home" (p. 42). Hospitality offered by the host to the other is always preceded by the hospitality offered to the host in his home, as his home is not strictly possessed but is only "hospitable to its owner" (Derrida, 1999, p. 42). This logic of the advance can stimulate the Ethics community of friends to extend hospitability beyond those members who have already been offered a home when they felt estranged from the CRE class. The sense of indebtedness (without any obligation of reciprocity) compels the community of friends in the Ethics class to reach out and encounter others, even the CRE group, as friends. Convinced that hospitality demands more than simply welcoming and giving access to the stranger, I shall proceed with a reflection on the ethical issues that emerge from hosting the stranger-becoming-friend in the Ethics community of friends.

Paradoxically, for conceiving unconditional hospitality, one needs to refer to laws of conditional hospitality that were defined and determined by duties, rights, reason and power, inherited throughout history (Derrida, 2000). However, the event of real hospitality happens beyond these laws and through real encounters. At the heart of hospitality remains "a tension between two equally imperative laws but without opposition" (Derrida, 2005c, p. 7). Derrida remarks that real hospitality requires laws to be effective and determined but once affected hospitality becomes conditional. The Ethics class as a rational community is regulated by laws of hospitality (refer to 3.2.4). However, since these laws emerge from the fact that it is a rational

community, the Ethics programme speaks the language of rights and obligations. It speaks of reflective action that must subject itself to a moral law “that took root in our Western societies since the Enlightenment, that it is a law of reason” (D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 8). Nevertheless, to welcome the stranger who is "here to stay" (Bauman, 1993, p. 213), the laws of the rational community within the Ethics class have to be rethought.

A hospitable community provides “a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers” (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 3-4) in one’s absolute alterity and singularity. Any condition or law that demands assimilation or adherence to the laws of ‘my home’ would become an act of violence on the guest, as it suppresses his strangeness to preserve the authority of the host. “When the host says to the guest, "Make yourself at home", this is a self-limiting invitation” (Caputo, 1997, p. 111). It is as if, the welcomed stranger is allowed in and obliged to follow house rules in exchange for the hospitality received. Sincere hospitality can only happen outside the paradigm of reciprocity and thus the one who is welcomed cannot be reduced by programmed conditions. The hospitality offered by the Ethics class to anyone who does not feel a sense of belonging with the CRE class is perceived as an alternative place for a different community. Yet, this hospitality is conditional on the stranger-becoming-friend according to particular universal democratic conditions of fraternity. Simply put, the other is welcome if he is ready to commit himself to the oath of alliance and commonality demanded by democratic rules of the community (refer to 1.3.3). This results in making “the strangeness of the stranger invisible” (Biesta, 2004, p. 312). Nevertheless, it is the community that sustains the uniqueness of the other and thus, let the other remain other, mysterious and unidentifiable, that offers genuine hospitality without violence. Todd (2002), in accordance with Derrida’s notion of absolute alterity, recommends that the other has to be approached in ignorance. She posits the question that I think is relevant to the Ethics class: What do we need to know [about the other] in order to live well together?” (Todd, 2002, p. 67). It is only in greeting a person as an infinitely unknowable person that non-violent ethical encounters with the other can occur. The friend, in the community of the Ethics class, should never be grasped, assimilated or dominated by any identification. As Zembylas (2005) wonderfully puts it, our responsibility entails “giving up our positions as knowers” (p. 154) to respect the

unknowable mystery of the friend. This would make it possible for the Ethics community to approach others at the same time as not being preoccupied with who they are or what their values are. In other words, the other is treated as a friend without the necessity of identifying the other with a prescribed form of friendship (Derrida, 1988). This renders the traditional model of friendship and the western mode of living in a democracy (as mentioned in 3.2) problematic to the teaching of Ethics.

Derrida's contention that ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality has crucial implications on the curriculum and pedagogy of teaching Ethics. Unconditional hospitality in the present community of friends within the Ethics class cannot be conceived due to its demand to adhere to rational laws of democratic living. Nevertheless, as claimed by Derrida (2005a), the very fact that the community entertains hospitality, makes unconditional hospitality possible, if the laws are deconstructed to be open to the other without condition. Otherwise, the teaching of Ethics would end up living the contradiction of hostile hospitality (*hostipitality*), a term coined by Derrida to show how demands to adhere to laws and conditions make this friendship dependant on the other becoming a reflection of the selves within the Ethics class. Although the welcomed guest is offered friendship, the conditions for this friendship may be perceived as hostile, when they oblige the self to assimilate into the community.

4.4 Responsive Responsibility

A hospitable community of friends, as conceived by Derrida, demands an active commitment to respond to the other that cannot be restricted to a privileged small group of selected friends (refer to 2.4.3). The challenge is to overcome the bond with existing friends to reach the demand of all possible others. In contrast to Aristotle's brotherhood of friends, who are exclusively committed to each other in an oath of allegiance (as indicated in 1.1.6), a hospitable community is identified with the willingness to respond to others who are not formally recognised as being part of the same community. The Ethics class can rethink itself as a community of friends by its ethical readiness to respond to others unconditionally. Derridean suggestions for an

open friendship offer space to students to speak with their unique voice, rather than to learn to speak the privileged language of rationality of a unified community of Ethics. This allows for what is “unfamiliar, what is different, what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs” (Biesta, 2004, p. 320) to be seriously entertained.

The discourse and literature on the subject of Ethics strongly emphasise the rational, logical and critical voice of the students. This drives Ethics Education to produce autonomous rational agents to follow the authoritative and categorical voice. Therefore, it is not the friend who is speaking but the voice of the rational community in the student (Biesta, 2004). Biesta (2004) explains that habitually “schools provide students with a very specific voice, namely, with the voice of the rational communities it represents through the curriculum” (p. 312). In Derrida’s (1992c) words, this would make “ethics and politics a technology [...] it begins to be irresponsible” (p. 45) as one does not express freely his subjectivity but would be simply following predetermined laws. Can someone be held responsible for actions he did not execute out of his freedom? Obviously not. If the Ethics community seeks the development of a voice that is acceptable to the laws of the community, then its members cannot respond responsibly to the other. Opening an invitation to an ‘other community’ that sustains heterogeneous individuals, as proposed Biesta (2004), would offer a new alternative to students in the Ethics programme to individuals to speak “the language of responsivity and responsibility” (p. 318). If there ought to be a similar response and a similar voice dictated by the “law of reason [...] ingrained in our human nature”(D.L.A.P., 2018, Year 8), as suggested by the Ethics programme, then the student who is responding can be easily replaced with another as the voice would be unchanged. On the other hand, encouraging students to respond in a unique manner, that emerges out of encounters with others from a different community, will reflect the very ethical function of the Ethics class; not only because it allows the other to be other but also due to the openness in which one responds to others as others (Biesta, 2004).

The Ethics class, as a place “with an appeal for responsiveness” (Lingis, 1994, p. 131), entails a reflection on responsible freedom in encountering the face of the other as an irreducible and ‘altogether other’ friend whose call demands response-ability. “The other looks at me and in that sense I am responsible” (Ron, 2014).

Derrida mentions the risk of the host becoming a hostage, sacrificing oneself to the welcomed friend. This demands the abating of one's defence mechanisms and auto-preservation to provide all the resources available to the friend. It "demands everything of me, even the food out of my mouth" (Caputo, 1999, p .191). Responding responsibly to such demand means that one is "turned now to the other, open-handed, and with the disarmed frailty of one's voice troubled with the voice of another" (Lingis, 1994, p. 11). This idea is well articulated by Derrida in *A Taste for the Secret* (2001) where weakness before the other is presented as a condition for the event to happen. "If I were stronger than the other, or stronger than what happens, nothing would happen" (Derrida & Ferraris, 2001, p. 64). This ethics of friendship makes a particular, almost impossible, demand on the Ethics class as it necessitates no calculation of what is given and received, of who is the strongest or weakest and at times a total forgetting of one's old self to openly be transformed through relations with others.

4.5 Questioning the Self at the Face of the Friend

Hospitality is more demanding than to simply let the stranger in without conditions and the provision of resources by the host (refer to 2.4.3). As argued by Mercieca (2007), whilst it is necessary to meet the needs of the stranger, hospitality is more than providing a service. Mercieca (2007) stresses that what is significant in hospitality is the provocation "to question who I am and am faced with my vulnerability. It is as though I become 'other' to myself" (p. 148) in the presence of the stranger. In contrast with Aristotle's notion of other self that reduces the other into a reflection of my self, Derrida suggests that when I encounter others in a manner that allows them to remain other, my self becomes under question and destabilised. The self is deconstructed so as to forbid any sense of closure of the *I*; "substituting for the closed and unique 'I' the openness of a 'Who?' without answer" (Derrida, 1995b, p. 276). The enemy, the stranger and the other provoke the exploration of the *I* who remains to come. This infinite exploration, that holds the self suspended, prevents, to the same degree, any determination of the other. Notwithstanding the vulnerability exposed by the encounter with others, the questioning of the stabilised democratic foundation opens for a new understanding of

who we are. Genuine accommodation of the stranger in the Ethics class entails a disposition to transformation and change of what is considered stable and determined in the class. It allows a transformation of the self that does not rest on the assimilation of democratic laws but a transformation that comes through the deconstruction of these laws. This is another motive for the Ethics community of friends to encounter others beyond it. In view of this, the subject of Ethics needs to adopt a pedagogy of interruption that may fit perfectly in the existing Ethics programme in its pursuit to cultivate in students the ability to question the self and reflect on their way of life.

4.6 A Friendship wounded with Auto-immunity

Coming from a Jewish tradition, Derrida is familiar with the cultural custom of the chair left intentionally empty for the unexpected during the Passover meal (Ruitenberg, 2011). According to Jewish culture, this chair represents the hospitable character of the people towards the unexpected guest, who may *perhaps* come or *perhaps* he will never come. Adopting the politics of the empty chair in the Ethics community would keep the class waiting vigilantly, expecting the arrival of the unexpected other. This idea is congruent with welcoming unknown others with unconditional openness to difference and the possibility of expressing themselves differently without the use of the rational language of the Ethics community of friends. This ethical stance of the empty chair may be attractive as a reminder of the possibility that anyone could be present on that chair. However, one still needs to imagine a situation where the chair is occupied by an undemocratic friend (which may seem a contradiction of terms). This radical openness to the anonymous other is wounded with the ‘perhaps’ of having a guest who reacts in hostility and turns out to be an enemy. The Ethics class here faces the same aporetic reality of democracy mentioned by Derrida, that of auto-immunity. “Nothing in common, nothing immune, safe and sound, *heilig* and holy, nothing unscathed in the most autonomous living present without a risk of autoimmunity” (Derrida, 2002a, p. 82). A democratic community that attempts to make itself immune from the unrecognisable other (enemy) risks that it destructs its very foundations that demand relations with others and an openness to what is yet to come. Unconditional hospitality to the other means

an openness to the unrecognisable guest that may be the enemy to democracy who can possibly destruct it. “Without autoimmunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen or arrive; we would no longer wait, await, or expect, no longer expect one another, or expect any event” (Derrida, 2005d, p. 152). This motivates the Ethics community of friends to put itself in a vulnerable position when encountering all others and experiences auto-immunity. The unrest in class would possibly develop into a destabilised community that may threaten its existing conditions. Without this threat, however, the class remains in danger of always circulating encounters within the same grounds.

The argumentative and consensual politics within the existing setup of the Ethics class would be no more than a community of friends who are hostile to the enemy and find no ethical objection to ‘kill’ him or simply ignore him. Derrida (2005b) contends that killing the enemy would mean “as if someone had lost the enemy, keeping him only in memory, the shadow of an ageless ghost, but still without having found friendship, or the friend” (p. 76). We will be right then to exclaim: ‘there is no friend’ and ‘there is no enemy’ as we would have lost both of them. The possibility of the enemy and the friend who “change places [...] intertwine, as though they loved each other” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 72) suggests alternative pedagogical arrangements for the teaching of Ethics. The rediscovery of the friend in the person of the enemy implies a totally new experience of friendship in the Ethics community of friends. The implication for the teaching of Ethics is that the Ethics class extends its promise for friendship beyond its community, with the community of CRE or whoever is considered enemy. This calls for a radical reconsideration of the meaning of teaching and learning Ethics in conjunction with a totally new experience of friendship.

4.7 Towards a Democracy to come

The Derridean notion of friendship calls for an exploration of a friendship marked with its ever-changing conditions and its indefinite deferral of its meaning and objective. This political re-dimensioning of friendship (refer to 1.2), allows for an exploration of friendship, where students are concurrently moving towards the democracy to come. Considering that the Ethics curriculum insists on respect and

attention to distinctive persons through a critical lens, the rethinking of the relational dimension needs to be addressed. It needs to be rethought in a way that welcomes radical otherness; an otherness that would be welcome even if it disrupts its democratic arrangement to explore other possibilities of democracies that are not yet. The Ethics class already deals with controversial issues which stimulate diversity of opinion and conflict. Differences are welcome but one has to question if this is actually done to resolve them through consensual agreement, rather than to disrupt its harmonious functioning. Ethics students are to cultivate themselves in living in an incessant tension between sameness and otherness in exploring possibilities for "non-violent or less violent relations to the other" (Shina, 2013, p. 259).

Inspired by Derridean friendship, the pivotal ethical encounter with the enemy should help the students, both in the Ethics class as in the CRE class, to become a force in society for a new way of living together. The possibility of welcoming the enemy as a friend helps students to move towards a radically open friendship that contributes to democratic citizenship envisaged outside the framework of brotherhood which, as I argued previously (1.1.6 and 1.3.3), "has contracted democracy to something less than it is" (Caputo, 1999, p. 186). Since "there is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 22), the exploration of a new friendship in the Ethics class foreshadows the possibility of unpredictable conditions of democracy that Derrida terms it as a democracy yet to come.

4.8 Conclusion

Without ignoring the Aristotelian thoughts that are evident in the Ethics programme, this chapter suggested what would be the promises of deconstructing friendship as commended by Derrida. Inspired by his notion of lovence, the Ethics community can adopt a new and de-limited concept of friendship that can offer friendship as a gift without any form of calculation. As opposed to what has been traditionally understood, the Ethics class shall be open to every other who does not identify with its community and even ready to engage with the figure of the enemy to explore and actively experience the radical concept of friendship to come. This transforms the Ethics community into a hospitable space where the other, whoever the other might

be, is greeted in his otherness without the need to be identified or to comply with the rational laws of the Ethics community of inquiry. This makes the class able to host all others unconditionally. Friends of the Ethics class are allowed to speak through their subjective voice without the need to follow an external moral code. Through their voice, students will respond responsibly to the other in a non-violent manner. The Ethics class surrenders its dominant position to render itself susceptible before others. This vulnerable state allows students to be provoked to rethink and question their selves to become something new. This politics and ethics of friendship helps the Ethics community of friends in its quest for a new meaning of friendship that differs from what has been traditionally understood whilst leaving itself ajar for future possibilities. Drawing on Derrida's philosophy, the Ethics community of friends shall embark on an ethical journey that heads towards a new form of friendship that will constitute the democracy to come.

Chapter V

5 Can Friendship be taught?

As explained in the previous chapters, Derrida provides an account of friendship that deconstructs the dichotomies between friends and enemies to go beyond thinking about friends in relation to social or political definitions of what friends are or who they should be. Rather than presenting his critical thoughts of canonical texts on friendship with new definitions, Derrida suggests that friendship should be rethought through our encounters with others, pointing to the ethics of relations that can possibly develop. This has important implications for how we can live with each other in a democratic society. Derrida's idea of democracy is different from that of Aristotle's and other visions of democracy based on brotherhood. These visions are grounded in the idea of unity that is mostly based on preconceived commonalities that people as citizens share. The Ethics class in Maltese schools shares this vision even though the community of inquiry encourages a plurality of thought through questioning of ideas in friendship in a democratic setup.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the exploration of a new way of living together through a radically alternative friendship, necessitates a reflection on the function of the Ethics class and an exploration of how Ethics Education may be changed so that outsiders to the Ethics community are also encountered. The present pedagogy of teaching Ethics, drawing on critical thinking of a community of inquiry, is clearly against the practice of imparting existing beliefs of what is right or wrong. The issue, as I have explained thus far, is that a discussion on what makes a friend within the Ethics class is insufficient to encouraging encounters with those who are not generally considered friends within the existing educational setup. It also does not address ethical learning through encounters with others beyond the Ethics community of inquiry. Derrida's deconstruction of the politics of friendship raises the question of how the teaching of Ethics can encourage such encounters. If friendship is about the reinvention of our ethical action towards the other that goes beyond the rational and categorical, then friendship cannot be regarded as a definite concept

that the teacher passes on to students (Derrida, 2005b). On the other hand, it cannot only critically reflect on accounts of experiences of friendship. Friendship cannot be understood and contained by the laws of reason; it cannot be conditional on pre-conceptual notions on what a friend is even if these are subject to open debate (refer to 3.2.1). My argument is that real encounters with others, even with those who are not part of a community of friends in the Ethics class, is important in exploring ethical horizons, however impossible or unreachable these may seem.

This chapter explores how the teaching of Ethics can create a climate that explores friendship to come and suggests pedagogical strategies that go beyond the limits of a unified community of inquiry. Biesta (2004) argues that a community of those who have something in common falls short of entertaining possibilities to welcome others who are different, including strangers or outsiders. According to Biesta (2006), education plays a major socialising function that contributes towards each student's "coming into the world" (p. 27). However, a community that has been established in difference from another community, using its common ways of proceeding as a way of unifying itself, may be limited in recognising students "as unique singular being'' (Biesta, 2006, p. 27). This is not to say that the Ethics class does not allow students to raise their unique voices. The critical thinking paradigm that grounds the teaching of Ethics is clearly aimed against the blind acceptance of the social world as it is. Nevertheless, what is problematic in this scenario, is that encounters between people only take place within the community of the Ethics class without any possible encounters with others of a different community. My argument in this chapter is that encounters with others, those of a different community, have important implications on the experience of teaching and learning Ethics.

In this chapter, I will also discuss ways through which teachers of Ethics can stimulate friendship through encounters with others and how the outcomes might be more unpredictable than those that happen within the Ethics class. The disruption of the rational community of inquiry in encountering others from different communities, as discussed in Chapter IV, is definitely not a disturbance in the learning process but a true learning experience through encounters. This chapter will also consider the possibilities and the ethical implications that emerge from the teacher-becoming-friend. So far, we've seen that deconstruction of traditional friendship sheds a new

light on the meaning of friendship and its implications on the student's democratic life. However, this process also affects to the same degree, the self of the Ethics teacher. It compels the teacher on two fronts. First, teachers of Ethics must assume the responsibility to think and respond to the ethical issues in an educational setup framed by the notion of a community of inquiry. For teachers to respond as unique beings they need to disrupt the unifying politics principally by their singular encounters with students as friends. These expose teachers to internal disruptions as they cannot simply follow rational ways of proceeding democratically but attend to their students as singular unique beings and not as part of a community. Second, the teacher has to assist students to be ready to open themselves to others to the point that they, as well as their students, are challenged by their unconditional hospitality to others. The creation of an environment where students question their selves in relation to others as friends may appear as "sheer madness" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 51). This chapter will focus on these challenges in rethinking the ethics of friendship and particularly those of Ethics teachers who initiate or respond to the call of others (even those considered enemies) in friendships and in pursuit of a democracy to come.

5.1 The Teacher as a Friend

As argued in Chapter III, the existing Ethics programme mainly draws on the Aristotelian notion of friendship that considers friends as brothers in terms of similarities and equality. Hence, if we are to speak Aristotle's language of equality and reciprocity, the concept of having the teacher as a friend can become problematic. Aristotelian friendship is critical of friendships of pleasure and utility that lead to important reflections about teacher-student friendship (refer to 1.1.1). Klonoski (2003) argues that friendship between teachers and students provides pleasures of teaching and learning and they are useful to each other's scope as well as achieving particular learning outcomes. However, Klonoski (2003) states that it is difficult to identify teacher-student friendship with virtue friendship that forms between "good men who resemble one another in virtue" (Aristotle, 1983, p. 257). In an educational setup, where the teacher and the student are on different power levels, it remains difficult to overcome their inequalities. The nature of teaching itself,

as an act of giving, can never involve complete reciprocal relations (Davids & Waghid, 2020). To Aristotle (1983), friendship between unequal is untenable as “friendship is said to be equality” (p. 262). An alternative language that transcends Aristotelian friendship is needed if teacher-student friendships are to be pursued and sustained.

Derrida’s deconstructive approach that ruptures traditional friendship, offers the possibility of having the Ethics teacher as a friend. First and foremost, one has to state that Derrida neologism of lovence/aimance, described in 2.3, accommodates the idea of having the teacher as a friend. Lovence implies an unconditional disposition on the teacher to act in a non-reciprocal and advantageous way towards the students. The teacher assumes the figure of the friend from the same moment he is called by the name ‘teacher’. Teaching in this manner can be conceived as an intrinsic “primordial act of friendship” (Klonoski, 2003). It is precisely lovence before love and affection, “an action before a passion” (Phillips, 2007, p. 8), that makes teacher-student friendship possible. Arendt (1998) articulates this idea when speaking of “a kind of friendship without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us” (p. 243). In *PF*, Derrida also maintains that lovence transcends all trajectories assigned to friendship, including age and proximity. His vision of lovence in friendship, “to love before being loved” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 5), facilitates the possibility of teacher-student friendship as it transcends the limitation of equality and any sense of reciprocity. This logic of gratuity in friendship conveys and stresses the idea of friendship and teaching as a gift. Furthermore, the de-limited and unconditional dimensions of lovence allow for inclusive and non-violent relationships between teachers and students. When the teacher engages with students in pedagogical encounters and assumes his responsibility to teach, he is loving before being loved, without expecting to be loved in return (Waghid, 2014). It is this ethical responsibility of the teacher towards the students that makes the teacher assume the figure of the friend.

5.1.1 A Responsible Friend

The Ethics teacher's friendship entails a "sense of obligation and responsibility to one's students in ways that cannot be circumscribed to currently or institutionally sanctioned ways" (Shina, 2013, p. 260). Responsibility renders the teacher in tension between his *answering before* the law to fulfil the obligation of assisting students to reach their learning outcomes and on the other hand, to *answer to* and *respond to* the student's singularity (refer to 2.4.3). In encountering the student, the teacher is caught between the universality of the system and the singularity of the student (Derrida, 2005b). As a sovereign host, the teacher is always waiting for the students to welcome them hospitably as his guests-becoming-friends. As Cohen (1986) suggests, we can assign Dostoyevsky's principle to the teacher: "We are all responsible for everyone else - but I am more responsible than all the others" (p. 31). The teacher, as an authoritative figure, should consider himself the most responsible person in the teaching of Ethics, not because he has superior ethical knowledge, but because of his ethical responsibility to respond to others as others. The teacher's "sense of concern or discomfort" (Shina, 2013, p. 265) in responding to the vulnerable position of others reflects the 'madness' that Derrida speaks about in *PF*. In offering this kind of friendship, the teacher enables his students to envisage the possibility of new and radical friendships. Biesta (1999) claims that the ultimate concern of education and educators, and we can also include the educators in the Ethics class, is to put oneself in the presence of the other and to encounter the other face to face. Although the actions taken by the Ethics teacher might not be perfect or unconditional, but what matters is "to respond as oneself and as irreplaceable singularity" (Derrida, 1995a, p. 51) to the specific demands of the students. It is primarily the ethical response of the teacher that merges the figure of the teacher with that of the friend (Davids & Waghid, 2020). Thus the point here is that what should be more importantly demanded from the Ethics teacher is not to voice her rational voice or encourage her students to do the same for the sake of a unified democratic vision but to attend to the student and to reimagine and reinvent his response in his unique voice (Shina, 2013). It would be quite easy for the teacher to comply with excellent exemplars and imitate them. This would render teaching to an enactment of a programme or merely imitating decisions and actions already taken by other professionals (Shina, 2013). To Lingis (1994), when a teacher avoids

responding in his subjective voice, the teacher would not be fulfilling his responsibility, as no formula will ever be adequate enough to encounter the student in his absolute singularity. It is when the Ethics teacher is ready to experience freedom from such regulations and hence assuming responsibility to respond to each student that friendship can be offered.

5.1.2 A Hospitable Friend

Derrida (2002b) states clearly that unconditional hospitality could be unbearable to the host as he has to endure the consequences that extreme limits of hospitality entail. Regarded as the host of the class, the Ethics teacher has a lot to endure to nurturing a hospitable community of friends; a hospitable class requires a hospitable teacher. Primarily, the Ethics teacher should be ready to welcome “who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor” (Derrida, 2000, p. 77). The teacher should be ready to offer his ‘home’ to the other unconditionally and to accept him with his strangeness and alterity, especially if the other is socially marginalized or considered an enemy of the Ethics community within the school. To Derrida (2002a), real “hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home” (p. 364) and for the teacher, home is the class, the curriculum and that which identifies himself. For the event of unconditional hospitality in class, the Ethics teacher has to encounter students without determinacy and self-surrender to them.

The teacher cannot welcome his student with determinacy, that is, having pre-established expectations of who the student should be. If the student is to be identified and examined to check whether he is entitled to the teacher’s friendship, then hospitality would be reduced to the laws of hospitality set by the rational community (Derrida, 2000). The teacher would have rendered his hospitality to limited and conditional hospitality. Within educational institutions, teachers are usually provided with information on students or seek knowledge about them for teaching and learning to take place. However, unconditional hospitality entails that teachers do not let their knowledge condition their actions and welcome the students

as anonymous strangers. “Unconditional hospitality implies that you don’t ask the other, the newcomer, the guest to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself” (Derrida, 2002b, p. 70). The ethical obligation of teachers, including Ethics teachers, is to respect the infinite distance between themselves and the students to maintain the strangeness and uniqueness of their relationship (Davids & Waghid, 2020).

Todd (2004) suggests that students are to be approached by the teacher “with ignorance” (p. 337), that is, the student will always remain a mystery and allows for the absolute surprise. This is what Derrida (2002b) posits as a condition of unconditional hospitality. Although ethical and non-violent friendship by the Ethics teacher is offered in the recognition of the absolute alterity of the student, the “reinterpreted, displaced, decentralised, re-inscribed” (Derrida, 1995b, p. 258) figure of the teacher is more meaningful. In other words, friendship requires from the teacher a rethinking and problematisation of his self and comportment. Even more important, we can say that it is through his encounters with students that the teacher is able to engage and explore himself to the point that he identifies himself as other (Waghid, 2014). Keeping himself ajar before students and set to change is a sign of surrender by the teacher to offer his friendship (Ruitenberg, 2009).

The surrender of authority and mastery by the teacher meets the welcomed guest who contests “the mastery of the house” (Derrida, 2000, p. 5). Readiness to be contested and challenged by students makes friendship, as Derrida conceives it, possible. Rather than making the students fit into the teacher’s home, welcoming students as guests means being ready to let the home be disturbed and changed with the students’ presence. “The hospitable teacher is willing to take risks and challenges. To be hospitable is to be open to being contested and challenged but not to dominate, manipulate, patronise or control” (Ruitenberg, 2011, p.33).

Teachers are always under pressure to make students acquire certain knowledge, values and skills established by the curriculum. As discussed in Chapter III, the Ethics programme intends to make students able to live with others in a unified community, following conditions of rational debate. A hospitable Ethics teacher would certainly feel the tension between the demands of the set curriculum

outcomes and the uniqueness of the student who cannot be solely understood in terms of his rational thoughts. The challenge of a hospitable teacher is to permit the student to come into the world in his own way and uniqueness at the same time as following the set curriculum and a learning outcome-oriented programme (Ruitenberg, 2009). As I explained, undetermined encounters, openness to change and self-surrender illustrate the vulnerable position that friendship demands on the Ethics teacher as I will continue to explain.

5.1.3 Is it worth the Risk?

Waghid and Davids (2020) reflect on the risks involved when teacher-student friendships are pushed to the limit of possibility as Derrida suggests. They refer to the significance of the teacher's role in the ethical development of the students. Noddings (2013) asserts that "the teacher bears a special responsibility for the enhancement of the ethical ideal" (p. 178) of students. The teacher is present when the ethical character of the student "is being initially constructed" and therefore, the role of the teacher "has unique power in contributing to its enhancement or destruction" (Noddings, 2013, p. 178). This can also be applied to the whole spectrum of learning because as Johnston (2006) affirms, learning "is embedded in the relationships we [teachers] develop in our classrooms and our schools" (p. 5). She insists that since the teacher's relationship with students is so crucial, relational pedagogies and their moral growth should be part of their initial and ongoing training. However, despite the "host of possibilities for personal and moral growth" (Sheffelton, 2012, p. 222) teacher-student friendship, as I explained, is ethically demanding on the teacher. To say the least, the teacher must be vigilant in being open and committed to all students without discrimination. For the Ethics class teacher, this is not only related to the significant negative effects on students but also to help them envisage possibilities of extending their friendships with others as others (Korinek et al., 1999). Although the ethics of responsibility can be viewed as "madness" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 51), the teacher who is committed to motivate and inspire students for and in friendship in Derridean terms, will definitely consider this endeavour as a worthwhile risk (Shina, 2013). After all, the teacher's concern is the enhancement of student's ethical life, also by pushing the boundaries of existing

conditions of democracy. Teachers make possible the coming of a democracy where people act responsibly towards the betterment of humanity by engaging with others beyond their established community of Ethics.

5.2 Making Way for the Friendship to come

As argued at the beginning of this chapter, friendship in the Ethics class can be nurtured in adopting a politics and ethics of friendship rather than critically discussing prescribed principles and virtues (refer to 3.2.1). Noddings (2002) posits that creating the appropriate conditions for the possibility of living a good and ethical life is more effective than formal teaching of values. She argues that moral reasoning alone proved to be less efficient with regard to ethical development as it would not lead to moral action (Noddings, 2002). The following sections contemplate different approaches by which the Ethics teacher can create an apt environment for students to live a politics and ethics of friendship.

5.2.1 A Pedagogy of Interruption

The Ethics programme compels the teacher to cultivate a rational community of friends (refer to Chapter III). However, the Ethics class can also become an other community as advocated by Biesta (2004). Despite the distinctiveness between the rational community of Ethics and other communities, one cannot irresponsibly leave them separate from each other without attempting possibilities of encounters. This can be done when a “pedagogy of interruption” (Biesta, 2016, p. 73) is enacted by the Ethics teacher (the CRE teacher is not excluded from this responsibility either). Despite the negative connotation to the idea of ‘interruption’, the priority given to encounters with others as friends beyond existing communities above all other activities, will make a radical difference to teaching and learning Ethics. The other community exists intermittently, at those moments when the class finds itself exposed to an imperative to respond to others we do not yet know (Biesta, 2016). Communities that respond to each other cannot be forced into existence by a fixed methodology or a determined programme; pedagogies cannot be standardised to guarantee set outcomes. Biesta indicates that unpredictability can be seen as a

weakness in education, however, its implied ‘weakness’ allows for the possibility of the uniqueness of the friend. Re-invented ways to respond to the call of other students emerge from time to time and interrupt the work of the rational community if the teacher is ready to act beyond its laws. Teachers, as well as students, need to welcome the unexpected to be provoked by their encounters with others, otherwise, they risk becoming undisturbed and untroubled with the unforeseen appeal of their friends (Biesta, 2016).

Friendship offered by the teacher is not after intimacy but a “love in view of knowledge, of truth, of the novelty of the new, where ‘new’ refers to again and again, once again, anew – that is to see the new coming, the new thoughts” (Derrida, 1997, p. 65). Teachers provoke the students to see things differently and always new, “in other words, to open oneself up to other possibilities” (Waghid, 2014, p. 18), even to new possibilities never contemplated by the curriculum or by the teachers themselves. This highlights the importance of opening themselves, other teachers and students in search of a new understanding of encounters. In other words, “teachers are the friends of students for rupturing their thoughts” (Waghid, 2014, p. 19). The teacher as a friend is in a relationship “of trust without contract” (Derrida, 2005b, p. 204) with students that allows them not to feel indebted to the teacher and to express themselves freely, even if they take divergent paths (Waghid, 2014). This means that Ethics teachers should go a step further and grant students the freedom to wage war against themselves and question the very programme that is being followed. At this point, the teacher-friend would also be welcoming who is perceived as the enemy. The possibilities for students and teachers in embracing the enemy-friend aporia (discussed in 5.2.2) also contribute to the nurturing of unanticipated friendship within the community that keeps the students’ mode of living in a democracy always suspended and deferred. To Waghid (2014), this approach to education would help both teachers and students to “remain open to new possibilities, future imaginings, and incalculable truths” (p. 20).

5.2.2 Cultivating an Attitude of Hospitable Encounters

Cultivating a climate of unconditional hospitable encounters for friendship is an important element for Ethics Education. What is significantly challenging is the ethical relation in the light of enemy-friend aporia (refer to 1.5). In order to interrupt the dichotomy of enemy-friend and to bring both figures in close proximity whilst granting their distinct existence is not an easy task. The teacher needs a particular democratic commitment to initiate relations with others: teachers and students beyond the Ethics class. If the Ethics class envisages the CRE class as a distant community (refer to Chapter III)**,** there can never be a move towards the friendship to come. An explorative pedagogy can interrupt this oppositionality and create a climate where friends can encounter those that are considered enemies. This calls for Ethics teachers to understand and appreciate a politics and ethics of friendship through their encounters with the CRE teachers at school. Instead of remaining concerned with the teaching of Ethics within the Ethics class, teachers need to expand relations that make friendship between the two groups possible. The welcoming of the unexpected guest or the practice of the empty chair is not enough. The teachers of Ethics need to go beyond the comfort of their 'home' and knock on the door of their neighbours to initiate such encounters even though the other community of CRE may consider this initiative as a 'trojan horse' from an unexpected enemy (Derrida, 2002a). Their presence may surprise and disturb students of both sides and position them in a vulnerable position. Retaining the vulnerable position means that students pose themselves as completely open, refraining to assault those who are considered enemies. This readiness to encounter the enemy non-violently challenges the students to understand the significance of preserving the identity of the other, even if this radical openness may endanger the same class (refer to 4.6).

Such eventualities provide teachers and students occasions where those considered enemies are regarded as possible friends as well as "honour[ing] in the friend the enemy he can become" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 282). Staying away from the 'undemocratic' friend or immediately envisaged as the enemy to be destroyed would hinder the ethical processes of openness to friendship. By providing encounters with those who are usually identified as the enemy in class, the teacher creates an

environment where students can commit themselves to unconditional hospitality which as Derrida (2002a) contends, might take place “without invitation” (p. 360).

These unconditional encounters provide students with the opportunity to reinvent new ways of living together and explore the radically new friendship as contemplated by Derrida. Paradoxically, what is different, threatening and evokes discomfort, is what stimulates students to develop a politics and ethics of friendship between the two classes that will change their usual ways of living. These encounters help students explore how they can respect each individual with his particular history and identity, and understand what is culturally, socially and emotionally valuable in and to others. The presence of the other makes students and teachers of both classes question their own selves. The face to face encounter with those who are usually perceived as enemy helps them rethink their strong held notions of enmity and the possibility that friendship with them is also possible.

5.2.3 Responsibility

In 2.4.3, I argued how Derrida, in *PF*, links friendship with the ethics of responsibility and in 4.4 we have seen how students assume responsibility when, in their unique voice, they develop their ability to respond to others according to the singularity of the encounter. Ethics teachers that are disposed and attentive to respond to others generate a sensitised ethical education conscientised by a call for encounters that cannot be put on hold and should be addressed even before any word is uttered. Students, like their teachers, leave their comfort and secure zone to explore the uncharted territory of responsibility. This marks the very ethical dimension of friendship of the teaching of Ethics where the students’ main responsibility is their response-ability, which, as Derrida (2005b) conceives it, is a condition of possibility for friendship (refer to 2.4.3).

Even more challenging is Derrida’s contention of responsibility before memory, implying that human beings should never be conditioned by previous actions of those who call for a response. This radically open way of responding respects the singularity of both who is offering friendship encounters and the other. Derrida

(1992b) speaks of the “fresh judgment” (p. 23) which means that the friend has to rethink his position (preconceived ideas) each time he encounters the plea of the other or contemplate to initiate the plea. This is another reason that accentuates a politics of friendship that exceeds laws or organisational arrangements that are rigidly tied with the separation of set programmes and curricula.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter underlined the significant role of the teacher in cultivating a space where Ethics students can radically experience friendship through encounters with different others. I argued that a politics and ethics of friendship in the Ethics class can be nurtured if teachers contemplate themselves as being friends. Derridean friendship makes possible student-teacher relations based on their ability to respond in non-reciprocal manners and unconditionally welcome students in their particular otherness. This chapter accentuates the ethical responsibility of Ethics teachers in *answering to* students in their irreducible singularity beyond any programmed encounters so as to freely respond to students in always new and unpredicted ways. The most challenging task of Ethics teachers is to provide students with opportunities of encounters with different others, especially those outside the Ethics community of friends; moving towards an alternative friendship through such encounters. One understands that existing curricular frameworks that compete to secure a place in an already full learning schedule may hinder such initiatives. However, the teacher’s responsibility involves taking such risks for the sake of enhancing the ethical and educational experience of all.

Conclusion

One challenge that friends face in a hospitable community such as that of the Ethics class, where different others are welcome, is how to maintain friendship within the community whilst respecting and maintaining the alterity of each person. Another important aspect of the teaching of Ethics of friendship is extending encounters beyond the community to others who are considered strangers. In Chapter II, I have explained that Derrida (2005b) contends that “friendship orders me to love the other as he is while wishing that he remain as he is” (p. 223). This is completely different from the other self concept, where the other is expected to mirror my thoughts and beliefs if he wishes to be part of my community. As discussed in Chapter III, any form of attempt to change the other, to be considered a friend and make his strangeness seamless, would be a violent force on the self of the friend. In *Force of Law*, Derrida (1992b) expresses his uneasiness with those who, assured from their good intentions to welcome others, remain unaware of the violence they incur on them.

The role of the teacher is to bring students aware of the unintended violence that schools arrangements produce and to provide opportunities to encounter others without reshaping the other in a mirror image: similarity. Friendship is “the recognition of a common strangeness which does not allow us to speak of our friends, but only to speak to them” (Derrida, 1988, p. 644). Encountering different others facilitates the awareness of the singularity of each individual that can never be fully consumed. Biesta (2004) argues that the disposition to respond to the other cannot be separated from a rational grounding of a community (refer to 4.2.1). We always need to provide a reason why assimilative approaches in welcoming the other within a community are not enough. As argued in Chapter V, the teacher of Ethics is responsible to initiate debates with students to reflect on past and present experiences of friendship within the Ethics class and point to their limitations. Who is welcome in the Ethics class? What are the limits of our hospitality? Are only those in the Ethics class considered friends? How do we relate to others beyond the Ethics class? Is it possible for us to have encounters with them? Students must be helped to realise that friends remain irreducible distinct others just as much as they cannot

claim to know those who are identified as enemies. The question then is: to what extent are we to take risks in reaching out to others?

Questions posed by the teacher: ‘‘what do you think about it?’’ (Biesta, 2006, p. 150) and “what does this mean to you?” are familiar during conversations in the Ethics class. They push the students to express their subjectivity and try to make them aware of the alterity of the others and identifying their difference to others. Biesta (2004) argues that, in encouraging students to “come into the world as unique and singular beings” (p. 319), the Ethics teacher requires to encounter students with ignorance. This approach creates a sense of trust in class and helps the students to express their true selves without fear even if they reveal their vulnerability. It also fosters a space where friends can be surprised by others and even surprised by their very disclosure. These events of self-revelation by students reiterate the significance of the ethical and responsible reaction of the Ethics teacher towards the students.

One may question whether this response to the other as other may actually lead to some form of ethical self-transformation of those involved in the encounter. This relates to the point made earlier about the rupture of the self (refer to 4.5). In this case, the rupture does not involve a change in identity but a change in the way people, whatever their identities, respond to each other. Students of Ethics or students of CRE can still identify themselves through their association with the particular classes, however, their identification should not be so rigid as to hinder approaching each other through encounters that make the learning of Ethics contextualised within these encounters.

My suggestion is that deconstructive thinking should inform the critical thinking approach of the Ethics class. In adopting Derrida’s approach of deconstruction, the students of Ethics become educationally sensitive through an education that ruptures taken for granted concepts ingrained in particular ways of thinking that generally and dominantly reflect a Westernised viewpoint. Through their role, teachers of Ethics urge students to explore what is presently hidden in their understanding of the world. This approach to teaching invites students to rethink and desire a friendship through the ethical experience of encounters. These experiences cannot be premeditated or thought about beforehand as the contexts in which they take place and the individual

persons we meet always come as a surprise. More drastically, students would have a first-hand experience with those usually considered enemies and are welcomed as friends. This can be achieved by keeping the Ethics class always open to the "perhaps" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 26) rather than discussing thoughts about what a friend should be and who he is and the form such encounters would take. The outcomes of such encounters escape any measurable criteria as the transformation through encounters with others is incalculable. The disposition to the 'perhaps' would also open the community of friends to a democratic life which cannot be foreseen except as a possibility which we cannot not afford to explore (Higgs, 2002).

As Derrida (1993) maintains, putting oneself in a state of uncertainty and doubt does not mean weakness but a maturity of the mind as one would challenge his paralysis to discover something new. Both the Ethics teacher and student should not be afraid to destabilise themselves and move out of their comfort zones, to experience unthought-of discoveries (Derrida, 1978). This revolutionary way of thinking exposes the Ethics class to what is still on the "horizon without horizon" (Derrida, 2005b, p. 286) and transforms the community of friends into a force towards a new way of teaching and learning in schools.

Concretely, the learning outcomes cannot readily be measured or calculated. However, educators can get a glimpse of the experience of such encounters by the students' use of the journal, which is already identified as a tool in the Ethics curriculum to record their actual personal encounters with others. Students would reflect on what they felt during these encounters with others, comparing with those within the Ethics community as well as others. They could also give an account of uncertainties in the encounter, the conflicts that arose and how these conflicts were experienced. In this manner, the logistic separation between classes, which is required due to the practical arrangement of learning in separate classes, is breached and the boundaries between the Ethics class and the CRE class become more fluid. It would be more promising if students of Ethics and CRE are presented with collaborative activities that bring together students from both classes. Such a response encourages "the reinventing and freely decisive interpretation" (Derrida, 1992b, p. 23) of existing laws in an attempt not to be caged or limited by them.

These points bring together my main arguments in this thesis. If teachers consider a politics and ethics of friendship I have argued for, the community of friends within the Ethics and CRE classes can commit towards new ethical experiences of living together. Instead of keeping themselves trapped in the legacy of oppositions: friend or enemy, Ethics class or CRE class, Maltese, new Maltese or non-Maltese, the Ethics teacher can put these opposing movements into play to help students discover what remains absent in their experiences of friendship (Derrida, 1978). As discussed above, this approach to friendship is taxing on teachers as what they try to achieve depends mostly on their readiness to embrace a different ethical self and comportment which goes beyond the delivery of a set programme and current pedagogies. Having said this, I reiterate that Ethics teachers, in deconstructing the conventional ways of teaching, do not intend to destruct the present Ethics programme but to disturb its stability. Despite the toil of such endeavours and the risks of autoimmunity (from a Derridean perspective), the ethical transformations are worthwhile. Simply put, the effort of teachers to cultivate a space for a radically new community of friends, makes it more possible for students to move closer to the experience of the impossible event of friendship and democracy to come.

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