

### Light and Roman honour in Cicero's *De Amicitia* - Handout

In this session of Critical Dialogues, we will read Cicero's *De Amicitia*, sections 1-5, 11-12, 18-24, and 26-55. For these passages and their commentary, see the accompanying PDF.

The text, translation, and commentary of *De Amicitia* is from: Powell, J.G.F. 1990. *Cicero: On Friendship and The Dream of Scipio*, with an introduction, translation, and notes, Oxford: Oxbow Books.

See below excerpts from *De Amicitia* and other texts which will be useful for the session.

#### **Light and Roman honour**

Val. Max. 2.10.6: "blinded by the prestige of the man" (*maiestas; claritate uiri obcaecatus*).

Cic. Vat. 25: "whose dignity and splendour, I think, blinded your eyes" (*Domitium, cuius dignitas et splendor praestringebat, credo*)

#### **The text – Cic. Amic.**

1-5: see PDF

4: "bearing in mind the tradition of the memorable friendship between Laelius and Scipio, it seemed to me that Laelius was an appropriate character to talk about friendship" (*a patribus maxime memorabilem C. Laeli et P. Scipionis familiaritatem fuisse*)

4: "authority of eminent men" (*auctoritate et eorum illustrium*)

5: "now Laelius, a wise man (for so he was held to be) and pre-eminent on account of his own glorious friendship, will speak about friendship" (*nunc Laelius et sapiens, sic enim est habitus, et amicitiae gloria excellens de amicitia loquetur*)

6: "There has never been a better or more illustrious man than Africanus" (*nec enim melio vir fuit Africano quisquam nec clarior*)

11-12: see PDF

18: "But first, let me say in my opinion friendship cannot exist except in good men (*bonis*)"

18-24: see PDF

20: "Some put wealth before it, some prefer good health, some political power (*potentia*), some public honours; many even prefer pleasure... As for those who regard virtue as the highest good (*in virtute summum bonum*), that is very fine (*praeclarus*); but virtue itself both produces and maintains friendship, nor can friendship exist by any means without virtue."

divitias alii praeponunt, bonam alii valetudinem, alii potentiam, alii honores, multi etiam voluptates. beluarum hoc quidem extremum, illa autem superiora caduca et incerta, posita non tam in consiliis nostris quam in fortunae temeritate. qui autem in virtute summum bonum ponunt, praeclare illi quidem, sed haec ipsa virtus amicitiam et gignit et continet, nec sine virtute amicitia esse ullo pacto potest.

26-55: see PDF

100: “it is goodness (*virtus*), human goodness... which both brings friendships together and preserves them. It in is found all harmony, stability and trust. Whenever it rises up and shows forth its light (*extulit et ostendit suum lumen*), and sees and recognises the same thing in another, it moves out towards it and in turn receives what the other has to give. Thence love, or friendship, for both have their origin in loving, blazes forth (*exardescit*); and loving is nothing other than showing affection for the object of love for his own sake, not because of any lack in oneself, or the prospect of any advantage; though advantage does indeed flower from friendship even if one was not particularly aiming at it.”

Cic. Amic. 104: “I recommend you to place such a value on goodness (*virtus*), without which friendship cannot exist”

### Other References

Cic. *Fam.* 6.7.4 [SB 237]: “What do you think my state of mind is when I say to myself: “He’ll approve of that. But this word may cause suspicion. What if I change it? But I’m afraid this may make matters even worse.” Now then, I praise so-and-so: am I giving offence? Again, when I criticize, what if he doesn’t like it?” (Compare with Cic. Amic. 52-53)

Cic. *Div.* 2.23: “Or what do we think of Caesar? Had he foreseen that in the Senate, chosen in most part by himself, in Pompey's hall, aye, before Pompey's very statue , and in the presence of many of his own centurions, he would be put to death by most noble citizens, some of whom owed all that they had to him , and that he would fall to so low an estate that no friend — no, not even a slave — would approach his dead body , in what agony of soul would he have spent his life.” (Compare Cicero’s description of Caesar’s assassination with Cic. Amic. 53)

Cic. *Att.* 14.19.2: “the tyrant is dead, but tyranny persists” (Referring to Antony)

Cic. *Phil.* 2.1.3: “And before I make him any reply on the other topics of his speech, I will say a few words respecting the friendship formerly subsisting between us, which he has accused me of violating - for that I consider a most serious charge” (*a gravissimum crimen*)

Cic. *Fam.* 11.28.2-5 (letter from Martius to Cicero 44 BCE):

“I am well aware of the criticisms which people have levelled at me since Caesar’s death. They make it a point against me that I bear the death of a friend hard and am indignant that the man I loved has been destroyed. They say that country should come before friendship—as though they have already proved that his death was to the public advantage. But I shall not make debating points. I acknowledge that I have not yet arrived at that philosophical level. It was not Caesar I followed in the civil conflict, but a friend whom I did not desert, even though I did not like what he was doing. I never approved of civil war or indeed of the origin of the conflict, which I did my very utmost to get nipped in the bud. And so, when my friend emerged triumphant, I was not caught by the lure of office or money, prizes of which others, whose influence with Caesar was less than my own, took immoderate advantage.”