

Friendships After Facebook¹

*“The excellent person,” Aristotle writes, “is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself, since a friend is another self; and therefore, just as his own being is choice-worthy for him, the friend’s being is choice-worthy for him in the same or a similar way.”*²

OXFORD DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY (2016)

*“Consider with me now,” Cicero writes, “the limits and, so to speak, boundary stones of friendship. I’m aware of three opinions on the subject. . . . First, that we should care about our friends in the same way we care about ourselves. Second, that our goodwill toward our friends should be exactly equal to their goodwill toward us. Third, that whatever value a man puts on himself, his friends should do the same. I think all three of these views are wrong.”*³

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO (2018)

On 18 February 2019, BBC World News reported the results of an 18-month investigation into Facebook. Facebook friends around the world, now more than 2.2 billion of them in more than 100 countries,⁴ were extremely upset. For “the final report of the [UK’s] Digital, Culture and Sport select committee’s

18-month investigation into disinformation and fake news accused Facebook of purposefully obstructing its inquiry. . . .”⁵ Worse, many Facebook friends believed that Facebook had not just invaded their privacy; Facebook had violated the intimate personal nature of friendship itself.⁶

Facebook friends had already learned as recently as 14 December 2018 that something had gone terribly wrong. For Facebook itself had admitted publicly that during ten days in September 2018, unknown individuals and groups had hacked for still-unknown purposes 6.8 million private Facebook accounts. These accounts contained intimate personal data, including sometimes strictly personal photos.⁷ In fact, the number of hacked Facebook accounts was not the already massive 6.8 million accounts; the number of stolen accounts was 50 million.⁸

Had such globalized information and communication technologies deliberately deceived so many Facebook friends? Had so many Facebook friends been deliberately deluded about just what friendship is?⁹ Well, as one philosopher wrote recently, “In a world where social media, online relationships, and relentless self-absorption threaten the very idea of deep and lasting friendships, the search for true friends is more important than ever.”¹⁰ But how would true friends ever differ from Facebook friends?

1. Traditional Meanings of Friendship in Europe

The purpose of a recent international conference, the general invitation stated, “is to make sense of the diverse aspects of [the] transformation [of the meaning of friendship¹¹] with a special emphasis on the developments in the time of informational technologies.”¹² The time of informational technologies is our contemporary time of the now vast and enormously powerful social media networks.

We can date this time as starting 15 or so years ago in 2004, when Facebook, perhaps the largest, most powerful, and most problematic of all the social media networks, was founded.¹³

One implicit claim in this statement of purpose is that developing informational technologies are transforming in many ways the traditional Aristotelian understanding of friendship.¹⁴ But what exactly is this traditional understanding that is said to be undergoing transformation?

Notice that what is claimed as undergoing continual transformation is neither the current and common English language understanding of friendship, nor the Platonic understanding of Socratic friendship,¹⁵ nor the Ciceronian, mainly Stoic understanding. Rather, the claim is that, specifically, the traditional Aristotelian understanding of friendship is being transformed.¹⁶

On this traditional account, the conference organizers wrote importantly, friendship is taken “as a special kind of relationship between good, virtuous people who love the other for the other’s sake rather than for one’s own pleasure or utility.”¹⁷ Accordingly, what informational technologies are assumed to be radically changing is just this particular traditional Aristotelian understanding of friendship.

This understanding of friendship presupposes something important. The presupposition is that the expression “friendship” here refers mainly (and perhaps overly narrowly?) to both a current and an historical topic in moral philosophy.¹⁸

Currently, friendship may be understood philosophically as a relation of openness of two persons to one another that sometimes “can be seen as an enlargement of the self.”¹⁹ Historically, this current understanding of friendship echoes Cicero’s account when he writes in exile ca. 44 BC, at the end of the Roman Republic, to his childhood and life-long friend, Atticus. “Friendship,” Cicero writes,

“is nothing other than agreement with goodwill and affection between people about all things divine and human.”²⁰ (Interestingly, this historical perspective also echoes some current feminist, phenomenological, and metaphysical reflections on persons.)²¹

2. Friendships Yesterday and Today

Textual exegesis is usually required for substantiating any such summary account of Aristotle and of Aristotelian notions of friendship, for in fact they may differ – Aristotle’s views are not always identical to those of the Aristotelians.²² But we may reasonably leave aside such exegesis here.²³ We will assume then that the conference description of friendship is in general an accurate account of much (if not all) both of Aristotle’s and of the traditional Aristotelian view of friendship.²⁴ Proceeding this way, we can then see at least four key points about friendship.

First, we can see that Aristotle’s sense of friendship is certainly different from the sense of friendship in ordinary British English usage today as recorded in standard dictionaries of British English. For friendship in that parlance is taken as a relationship between two persons who, “independently of sexual or family love,” are “joined by affection and intimacy.”²⁵ No question then for friends, as Aristotle argued, having necessarily to be good virtuous people. They may be, but they don’t have to be – a key point.

Second, Aristotle’s sense of friendship is also different from the sense in common American parlance as recorded in standard dictionaries of American English. There, friendship is taken as a relationship between two persons where each is merely “favorably disposed” to the other and shows “good will” towards the other.²⁶ So no question then either for friends being merely favorably disposed or merely showing good will to one another. More is needed – another key point.

But the traditional Aristotelian sense of friendship, we remember, is a philosophical understanding. What then are the key senses of friendship today, not just in ordinary British and American usages, but more specifically in today's standard and current English language philosophical dictionaries?

Most philosophers today, one such dictionary reports, understand friendship mainly as "attachment characterized by disinterestedness and esteem."²⁷ Note that the first element in this description, "disinterestedness," matches nicely Aristotle's own emphases on genuine friendship being independent of utility. But the second element, "esteem," is clearly something less intimate than what Aristotle and traditional Aristotelians had and have in mind when they speak of friendship. They speak mainly of friendship as a personal relation based on either one or some mixture of utility, pleasure, and goodness – this is a third key point.²⁸

Another standard philosophical dictionary entry today offers a fourth key point, citing Aristotle himself on the intimate nature of the bond between friends that surpasses esteem. "The excellent person," Aristotle writes, "is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself, since a friend is another self; and therefore, just as his own being is choiceworthy for him, the friend's being is choiceworthy for him in the same or a similar way."²⁹

This rather profound remark merits further philosophical reflection, but not here. This citation is already clear enough for us to see that today's general philosophical understanding of friendship partly in terms of esteem is something less profound – a final key point.

So neither current British ordinary usage of the expression "friendship," nor current American ordinary usage, nor two different current English language philosophical descriptions of friendship is identical to, or even mostly similar to, traditional Aristotelian understandings. To take friendship, as many reflective persons do

today, in the sense I generalized earlier as “a relation of openness of two persons to one another that sometimes ‘can be seen as an enlargement of the self’” does not seem very traditional at all. Still, we do need to be clear about at least what we are referring to today by “friendship.”

I suggest that, when we speak of friendship here and now, we take the meaning of “friendship” in the main senses of what the linguists call common core, standard English.³⁰ Summarily then, we may use the expression “friendship” here to denote the relation of two persons in a well-disposed, trusting, respectful, mutually helpful, and warm interdependent relation with one another.³¹

This still quite tentative notion however does not seem to correspond very well with most traditional Aristotelian accounts of friendship. Why is that the case?

3. The Milieu of Friendships

Presumably many different kinds of reasons might eventually explain why most contemporary understandings of friendship do not line up very well with most traditional Aristotelian understandings. At least two sets of explanatory elements are, however, worth recalling here. Both would claim that substantive changes concerning the contemporary contexts of understanding friendship in contrast with their traditional contexts go far towards explaining why differences divide contemporary from traditional notions. One set of contextual explanations is mainly historical, however, while the other set of contextual explanations is mainly ethical.

One challenging historical contextual explanation for the differences between current and traditional understandings of friendship goes like this. Traditional Aristotelian understandings of friendship – we might call them “naturalistic” ones – are situated within

historical contexts in which the most encompassing human environment is said to be that of nature. In other words, the essential milieu in which friendship is most at home is the natural milieu. Friendship is, in that special environmental sense, an essentially natural phenomenon.³² That is, friendship seems first to appear in a milieu that is mediated pre-eminently by nature.³³ (Think of the necessarily collaborative nature of archaic hunter-gathering peoples.)

But with the coming of what is now called the anthropocentric era,³⁴ the essential environment of human beings has substantively changed. The most encompassing human environment now is no longer nature; rather, it is the globalized interconnected technological and communicational milieu. And friendship now is most at home in that new milieu. That is, the essential environment in which friendship is what it is today is no longer the natural milieu; the new milieu is an artificial one. Unlike yesterday, then, today friendship is mediated pre-eminently by “the technological conjuncture.”³⁵

Besides these elements of historical contextual explanations for changes in our current understandings of friendship, I also suggested that other elements of ethical and not just historical contextual explanations are important as well.

Thus, in some moral philosophies which award an important place for inquiry into the nature and philosophical problems of friendship, contextual inquiries are seen as opposed to formalist ones. Ethical formalists hold that ethical inquiry into puzzling philosophical aspects of phenomena like friendship and other similar phenomena should be structured in terms of highly abstract formal principles, often like those in geometry. By contrast, ethical contextualists hold that ethical inquiry into friendship and such phenomena should be focused on the nature of practical judgments in concrete situations often like those in aesthetics, and not on abstract principles like those in geometry.³⁶

Much more could and needs to be said about these two different kinds of explanatory strategies for many of the changed understandings today of the complex phenomenon of friendship, but these overly brief comments must suffice for now.

4. Friendships and the Facebook Case

Let us return now to the social media and the special case of Facebook's regular users, the so-called Facebook "friends," and recall Facebook's practically overwhelming influence on almost everything, including contemporary understandings of friendship.³⁷

Facebook provides an almost completely open forum for texts, photos, videos, and so on. All this big data is, however, not just for the pleasure of Facebook friends. Rather, the big data is especially for maximizing Facebook's immense profits from substantial fee-paying commercial exploitation by worldwide business networks of its often secretly and at times illegally amassed and archived information.³⁸

Further, Facebook has posted much extremely damaging false news that has abetted extrajudicial murders in the Philippines, ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, racism in India and Sri Lanka, Russian manipulations of the American presidential election in 2016, and the UK's Brexit vote to leave the EU. Facebook usage has also had deeply negative global political consequences.³⁹

As I write, every twenty minutes, Facebook provides online its self-edited versions of world, regional, and national news.⁴⁰ The credibility of its sources and its editing, however, is quite mixed. And the accuracy and integrity of these insistently updated regular news reports is increasingly challenged. Fake news we know is everywhere on the social media, and Facebook is one of its most effective disseminators.

Reputable news sources around the world have continued to document Facebook's repeated lies in extremely serious matters as well as its insincere apologies to do better.⁴¹ Yet so many persons continue to demonstrate what Martin Rees recently called the "rash abandon with which people had put their intimate details on Facebook. . . ." ⁴²

Thus, despite its founder's repeated and calculative attempts at reassurance, Facebook's many problems continue.⁴³ For example, the UK's *Guardian* newspaper reported on 15 December 2018 that "Journalists paid to help fix Facebook's fake news problem say they have lost trust in the platform."⁴⁴ And similar problems affect the other mainline social media, the so-called "GAFA" (Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon – plus Twitter).⁴⁵

5. After Facebook Friendships

In the time after Facebook, whenever that time comes, what lessons about friends and friendship can be expected? Such lessons must of course be speculative ones only, since philosophers no less than other professionals can hardly predict the future, especially in such humanistic domains as moral philosophy.

One speculative suggestion might be that comprehensive diagnoses of some of the most serious and accelerating threats now facing human beings globally – for instance international migration, extreme poverty, climate change, biotechnology, cybertech, robotics, and self-learning AI – must address the inadequacies of understanding friendship independently of today's strongly problematic emphases on individual privacy.

This suggestion has the merit of underlining a serious, persistent conceptual difficulty with many contemporary understandings of friendship. That difficulty is construing friendship in overly indi-

vidualistic terms. The problem is that all too often the human person continues to be taken as essentially an individual entity and not essentially as a relational one.⁴⁶

A second speculative suggestion is that dealing effectively with such global problems as those just mentioned requires rearticulating traditional philosophical understandings of friendship in other terms than exclusively those of utility, pleasure, and even goodness.

Much is to be learned for example about the shared goods of friends not just as relational individual beings but as members of groups of friends, and about machines acting together successfully in being at the service of humanity at large.⁴⁷ This is still but one of the several dimensions of the genuinely world culture of the sciences today that merits much closer philosophical examination.⁴⁸

A final speculative suggestion for now is that securing international peace, especially in an era of rapidly expanding nuclear warfare capabilities, requires persons and societies to reflect more critically on at least one fundamental ethical ideal. That ethical ideal specifically is the ideal of interdependent friendships among relative equals globally.

In other words, so much remains to be learned from scaling up specific and often extremely particular philosophical discussions to include global levels of pertinence as well as strictly professional ones. For while Facebook may directly concern but some “friends” among many, the single worldwide culture of science and its ongoing challenges and results concern all friends together.

A Question in Concluding

May I then conclude with a question for further inquiry? Why does comprehending friendship tomorrow require second thoughts today about the nature of the person? That is, just why does it seem

PART TWO. ETHICS

to be the case today that the extraordinary human values of friendship – in what tomorrow will almost certainly be an era of utterly novel experiences with robotics, interplanetary colonization, and inorganic intelligence – can probably not even be anticipated properly without re-examining the very nature of the human person freshly?

For starting on an answer, consider an old Greek proverb still needing sustained critical elucidation, “Show me your friends, and I’ll show you yourself.”⁴⁹

Endnotes for Essay Ten

- ¹ This text is a revised version of an invited paper first presented in shorter form at the International Conference on Integral Human Development in the Digital Age Series held on the theme, “Friendship in the Time of Facebook,” at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv from 27 February to 1 March, 2019.
- ² Cited in S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 190-191.
- ³ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, tr. P. Freeman (Princeton: PUP, 2018), pp. 101 and 103; Latin, pp. 100 and 102). Note that Cicero goes on to give his reasons. “The first – that we should do for our friends as we would do for ourselves – is certainly false. Think how much we do for our friends that we would never do for ourselves. . . . The second limits friendship to an equal exchange of actions and feelings. And this reduces friendship to a careful and petty calculation of credits and debits. . . . But the third view – that someone should be valued by his friends just as much as he values himself – is the worst of all. For often the spirit of friends is broken In these cases it’s not the mark of a friend to have the same judgment of another as he does of himself, but rather to work mightily to raise his spirits and lead him to better hopes and plans” (*Ibid.*, pp. 103 and 105; Latin, pp. 102 and 104).
- ⁴ For the numbers, see: B. Huet, «Quand Mark Zuckerberg impose ses lois à 2,2 milliards d’individus,» *Le Monde*, 20 December 2018.
- ⁵ BBC World News, Technology, 18 February 2019, and *The Guardian*, 18 February 2019.
- ⁶ On the importance of not just privacy but intimacy for personal friendship see the important work, *La Privation de l’intime*, by Michaël Foessel (Paris: Seuil, 2018).
- ⁷ LCI, 15 December 2018.
- ⁸ BBC World News, 30 September. See also S. Frenkel *et al.*, “Delay, Deny, Deflect: How Facebook Leaders Leaned Out in Crisis,” *The New York Times*, 15 November 2018, cited by Halpern *The New York Review of Books*, 17 January-6 February 2019, p. 12.
- ⁹ See especially the *Guardian’s* very detailed chronology for 2018 of the quite serious scandals Facebook has as yet unsuccessfully confronted (*Guardian*, 27 December 2018). See also the analysis of Facebook’s main problems in 2018 in M. Szadkowski, “2018, année terrible pour Facebook,” *Le Monde* 5 January 2019, p. 11.
- ¹⁰ P. Freeman, *How To Be A Friend* (Princeton: PUP, 2018), front flap text.
- ¹¹ Note that the social sciences have investigated the various phenomena of friendship very little. “The word is loosely applied in Anglophone society,” the editor of the current edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* writes, “although there

PART TWO. ETHICS

seems to be general agreement that it has a deeper meaning in Europe than in North America. Arguably, in non-Western cultures, it has a more explicit meaning and is used as the basis of structured social relationships. In all contexts, friendship is not a kin term, but it does imply some type of reciprocity and obligation between otherwise unrelated individuals" (*Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, ed. J. Scott, 4th ed. [Oxford: OUP, 2014], p. 263).

- ¹² On specifically current informational technologies see for example the special Outlook dossier, "Digital Revolutions," *Nature* 563 (29 November 2018), S. 131-148.
- ¹³ For a recent brief history of the evolution of the web itself, which supports the social media but pre-exists them, see among others F. Joignot, "30 ans du Web: Les idéaux trahis," *Le Monde Idées*, 16 February 2019, pp. 1-3.
- ¹⁴ For the ancient period, see especially D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).
- ¹⁵ See for example P. McCormick, "Friendship's Unrequited Loves: On the Alcibiades Speech in Plato's *Symposium*," *Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Platonicum Pragense*, ed. M. Cajthaml and A. Havlicek (Prague: Oikumene, 2007), pp. 293-311.
- ¹⁶ For the ancient period see especially D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).
- ¹⁷ For a recent authoritative statement of Aristotle's understanding of friendship see the summary account in C. Shields, *Aristotle*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 393-400. In addition, there are very many other extended scholarly studies of this topic in Aristotle.
- ¹⁸ Historically, philosophical analyses of friendship begin with Plato's dialogues *Lysis* ("what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out" [223a]) and *Symposium*. These discussions continue mainly but not exclusively through Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, Cicero's *Laelius de Amicitia*, Augustine's *Confessions* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, Aelred of Rievaulx's *Spiritual Friendship*, Montaigne's *Essais*, Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, and Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. The contemporary philosophical discussion begins with E. Telfer, "Friendship," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 71 (1970-1971), 223-241 (see the extensive contemporary bibliography Helm 2017 cited in endnote 9 below). A very good collection of historical and contemporary essays on friendship is: *Friendship: A Philosophical Anthology*, ed. K. Badwar (Cornell: CUP, 1993).
- ¹⁹ S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2016), p. 190. For standard philosophical understandings of friendship today see the article and comprehensive current bibliography in B. Helm, «Friendship», *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/friendship/>.

- ²⁰ *Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensus*,” *Laelius de Amicitia* in Cicero 2018, p. 38. On Stoic accounts of friendship generally see “*Amitié*” [*philia*], in D. Samb, *Etude du Lexique des Stoïciens* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009), pp. 23-25, and A. Banateanu, *La Théorie stoïcienne de l’amitié: Essai de reconstruction* (Fribourg Suisse: Editions universitaires, 2001), especially pp. 7-44 on sources and definitions.
- ²¹ For some pertinent recent phenomenological and comparative feminist work see respectively, E. Housset, *La Vocation de la Personne* (Paris: PUF, 2007), esp. *chapitre X: “Ipséité et transcendance,”* and E. McCarthy, *Ethics Embodied* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), esp. the introduction by T. Kasulis. For a persuasive contemporary view, see: A. Nehamas, *On Friendship* (NY: Basic Books, 2016). And for some recent metaphysical work, see: E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), esp. pp. 92-118, and A. Carruth and S. Gibb, “The Ontology of E.J. Lowe’s Substance Dualism,” in: *Ontology, Modality, and Mind*, ed. A. Carruth, S. Gibb, and J. Heil (Oxford: OUP, 2018), pp. 149-164.
- ²² They are also quite importantly different from contemporary philosophical understandings of friendship. In general, Aristotle’s understanding of friendship is, as Nehamas emphasizes, neither the Christian idea of universal love nor the Enlightenment idea of universal respect (Nehamas 2016, p. 241). In particular, for most philosophers today as for Aristotle, friendship is a virtue, though not, as it is for Aristotle, a moral virtue. Moreover, contemporaries stress the fact that friendship may not just be moral but immoral as well. Still more, contemporaries stress the conceptual conflicts between friendship as a virtue, and yet, despite the demands of justice for impartiality, friendship’s being necessarily partial. Still more, unlike many contemporary philosophers Aristotle pays no attention at all to the somewhat different salient elements of friendship particularly among women.
- ²³ For Aristotle’s understanding of friendship see especially J. M. Cooper, “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship,” in his *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton; PUP, 1999), pp. 312-335, A. Nehamas, “Aristotelian *Philia*, Modern Friendship,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 39 (2010), 213-247, and Nehamas’s discussions of the “Aristotelian Foundations” of friendship in his much more widely ranging book *On Friendship* (Princeton: PUP, 2016), pp. 11-36.
- ²⁴ For further studies on Aristotle’s quite nuanced understandings of friendship (*philia*) in books VIII and IX of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, see the titles and brief bibliographies in “General Overviews” (of Aristotle on friendship), “The Multiplicity of Friendships,” “*Philia* and *Eros*,” “Justice, Friendship and Political Friendship,” “Friendship and the Family,” “Friendship and Self-Love,” “Egoism and Altruism,” and “Problems Concerning the Need for Friendship” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. R. Polansky (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), pp. 457-460.

PART TWO. ETHICS

- ²⁵ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 6th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
- ²⁶ *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
- ²⁷ P. Gilbert, "Friendship," *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 324.
- ²⁸ Shields 2014, pp. 485-486.
- ²⁹ Cited in S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 190-191.
- ³⁰ The expression "common core Standard English" denotes "the kind of English that is widely accepted in the countries of the world where English is the language of government, education, broadcasting, news publishing, entertainment, and other public discourse" (cited in B. Aarts, *et al.*, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2014), p. 387). Besides Standard English in this global sense, many national standards of English are also recognized such as British English (BrE) and American English (AmE).
- ³¹ For current BrE usage, see for example the definitions and citations in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 6th ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 2007), hereafter cited as "SOED." For current AmE usage for the same see for example *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), hereafter cited as "AHDE." Note that the 5th edition of AHDE from 2016, although more recent, omits all of the earlier quite helpful comparisons of the meanings of antonyms for many items. Compare my usage here with the standard philosophical usage as of Fall 2017 as recorded in B. Helm's on-line *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article: friendship "is a distinctively personal relationship that is grounded in a concern on the part of each friend for the welfare of the other, for the other's sake, and that involves some degree of intimacy."
- ³² See: P. Warde *et al.*, *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2018).
- ³³ Cf. for example P. Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, tr. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2006), esp. pp. 101-151.
- ³⁴ Cf. J. R. McNeill and P. Engelke, *The Great Acceleration. An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2014).
- ³⁵ T. Imamichi, *An Introduction to Eco-Ethica*, tr. J. Wakabayashi (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), esp. pp. 75-92. Cf. P. McCormick, *Eco-Ethics and Contemporary Philosophical Reflection: The Technological Conjuncture and Modern Rationality* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008), pp. 153-179.
- ³⁶ S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 103-104.
- ³⁷ "... social media can spread panic and rumour, and economic contagion, literally at the speed of light. . . . National boundaries are now being eroded, not least by

the quasi monopolies like Google and Facebook.” . . . “Two trends are reducing interpersonal trust: firstly, the remoteness and globalization of those we routinely have to deal with; and secondly, the rising vulnerability of modern life to disruption – the realization that ‘hackers’ or dissidents can trigger incidents that cascade globally” (M. Rees, *On the Future: Prospects for Humanity* [Princeton: PUP, 2018], p. 219. Martin Rees (1942 –) is Astronomer Royal in the UK and former President of the Royal Society.

- ³⁸ For a striking example of Facebook’s secretive practices, see: M. Tual, “*Facebook paie les ados pour les espionner*,” *Le Monde*, 1 February 2019, p. 8.
- ³⁹ See the recent and comprehensively documented inquiries in P. W. Singer and E. T. Brooking, *Like War: The Weaponization of Social Media* (NY: Eamon Dolan, 2018).
- ⁴⁰ On this surprisingly complex topic see M. Kakutani, *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* (London: Collins, 2018), reviewed by A. Hatfield under the title “Moral Panic” in *TLS* [(London) *Times Literary Supplement*], 25 January 2019, p. 33.
- ⁴¹ Consider M. Zuckerberg’s observation in *The Frontline Dilemma*, a PBS documentary television series cited by S. Halpern in her very critical and extraordinarily well-documented critique of Facebook, entitled “Apologize Later,” dated 19 December 2018, and published in *The New York Review of Books*, 17 January – 6 February 2019, p. 12. “I think it’s more useful to, like, make things happen and then, like, apologize after, than it is to make sure that you dot all your I’s now and then, like, just not get stuff done.”
- ⁴² Rees 2018, p. 78.
- ⁴³ Cf. M. Zuckerberg, “*Je souhaite clarifier la manière dont Facebook fonctionne*,” *Le Monde*, 26 January 2019. For other similarly misleading statements from the main executives of Facebook see the statements of Facebook’s operations chief, Sheryl Sandberg’s comments in “*Sheryl Sandberg, l’icône ternie du groupe Facebook*,” *Le Monde*, 15 February 2019, p. 2, and Facebook’s public affairs chief, former UK Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg’s in fact deceptive statement, “*Facebook est en train de changer, de façon assez radical*,” *Le Monde*, 30 January 2019, p. 8.
- ⁴⁴ See also the *Guardian* podcast of 17 December 2018 with the UK technical expert, A. Hern, about Facebook’s problems with allowing apps to view hidden Facebook “friends” personal pictures which “had been uploaded although never chosen to be posted.” Note especially its continuing legal difficulties with having sold massive extremely private data of its Facebook “friends” to the criminally investigated company, Cambridge Analytica Files. Still more, “in December 2017,” a 29 November 2018 article in the internationally distinguished science weekly, *Nature*, reported that, “in response to public concern about Facebook’s impact on well-being, the company launched features that allow users to temporarily

PART TWO. ETHICS

hide a person, page, or group. . . . A month later, Facebook announced changes to the news feed that were meant to promote friends and groups at the expense of content from brands and media, on the basis for research suggesting that passive scrolling is bad for us, whereas connecting is good. Facebook then announced that it had invested US\$10 million to foster better communities and improve security. And this August [2018], it announced 'digital well-being' tools that allow users to monitor the time spent and set limits, and make it easier to mute notifications. Apple and Google have since made similar moves. . . ."

- ⁴⁵ For an idea of the power of social media, consider the extent of Russian influence through such media on the 2016 US presidential elections. Cf. *The New York Times*, 17 December 2018.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. the metaphysical analyses in my recently submitted book ms, *Relationality: On the Nature and Grounds of Persons*.
- ⁴⁷ In some domains a person can surpass those of any actual AI system, but in others an AI system today can surpass any person's accomplishments. But, as the former world chess champion Gary Kasparov claimed after the 2017 AlphaGo Zero AI feat of a machine becoming a world-class Go player in a single day when given only the rules for learning and not actual games, a person and an AI system together "can surpass what either could accomplish separately."
- ⁴⁸ See for example the shared vision of science (despite diverging larger agendas for humanity) like those of the internationally distinguished physicists Steven Weinberg and Freeman Dyson, in for example Weinberg's *Third Thoughts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2018) and Dyson's *The Scientist as Rebel* (NY: New York Review of Books Press, 2008).
- ⁴⁹ Cited in A. Nehamas, *On Friendship* (NY: Basic Books, 2016), p. 203.