

## MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE: META-ANALYTIC APPROACHES

### *HOMO RISIBILIS* AND THE SELF: THE PRACTICE OF SELF-FRIENDSHIP

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**Abstract:** Befriending oneself can be identified as the goal of all philosophical counseling, beginning as it is with self-knowledge and culminating in autonomy. Far from being an uncritical adherence to oneself, a psychological process of self-acceptance, or a Buddhist attitude of self-compassion, befriending oneself is a philosophical process of self-education. It involves expanding on the given doubleness of the self to accompany oneself, yet at a certain distance to enable the process of self-reflection. Proper self-reflection is at the root of proper reflection about the world – the ultimate epistemological goal – and the key to a non-projective and non-utilitarian approach to others, which is the ultimate ethical goal. While many philosophers wrote about friendship – the highest emotional state traditionally recognized by philosophers – few wrote about self-friendship and even fewer about the process of *befriending* oneself. The following is an account of the significance of befriending oneself, and of the way of doing so, based on historical accounts and on my own proposal. Building on the thought of Aristotle, Epicurus, Michel de Montaigne, Etienne de La Boétie, Benedict Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche and existential philosophers, I introduce my own thesis of *Homo risibilis* as the key to successful befriending. I conclude by arguing that befriending oneself is no different from philosophical self-reflection when orientated toward the most auspicious practical outcomes.

**Keywords:** self-friendship, philosophical counseling, self-reflection, homo risibilis, self-referential humor.

#### 1. FROM FRIENDSHIP TO SELF-FRIENDSHIP

Friendship ranks high in philosophy. Introduced by Plato in *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Lysis*, and *Phaedrus*, the ideal of love (*eros*) in its Platonic (sexless) form influenced Aristotle's view of friendship (*philia*).<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's account of the three forms of

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<sup>1</sup> This point is often overlooked, as is Aristotle's influence on the ideas that Cicero endorsed in his essay on Friendship, *de Amicitia* (1887), and which influenced both courtly and Christian ideas of love in the twelfth century. For these points, see Singer 1984, 106 and 200, respectively, and for Singer's analysis of *philia* in Christianity, see chapter 11.

friendship in Chapter 8 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1995),<sup>2</sup> developed in Chapter 9 into considerations of justice in friendship, (which result in approving of friendship even in inequality<sup>3</sup>) had a strong impact on the history of friendship in the West, not only on Cicero but on the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions, and on early modern and modern philosophy.

Notwithstanding Aristotle's views and their influence, it is in the Epicurean school of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that friendship is especially prominent in antiquity. Indeed, whatever the tensions between self-sufficiency and friendship that plague Epicureanism, as well as most ancient schools, the Epicureans make of the lack of the ideal of personal friendship in Stoicism an argument against the rival school (Kreitner 2012). Most importantly, they made friendship the highest pleasure in life, but its relation with the rest of the tenets of their philosophy is unclear (Mitchell 2001). However, it can be argued that the self-sufficiency they advocate is a necessary condition for friendship, which makes of the way to happiness and peace of mind a process of befriending. Indeed, this assertion can be generalized as it can be argued that all philosophic ways toward flourishing or peace of mind, or any sort of philosophic well-being, are ways of befriending oneself. Aristotle's account of self-friendship may enlighten this claim.

Aristotle maintains that all friendship, which he deems "the greatest of external goods" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1169b), is an extension of the human being's relation to himself. Every person "is his own best friend and ought to love himself best" (1169a). In defining self-love, Aristotle differentiates between loving oneself poorly (selfishly seeking the greater share of wealth, power, and physical pleasure, a pursuit which destroys our rational nature and thus cannot give us what we want) and loving oneself best (living in accordance with what is noblest in us, acting justly and cultivating a virtuous character to achieve the greatest share of what is truly desirable, that is living in a way that satisfies one's ideals of what one would like to be).<sup>4</sup> In this schema, developing virtue is the way to befriending oneself or loving oneself best.

The idea that flourishing or enjoying peace of mind follows, even rewards, befriending oneself is an implicit constant in philosophy, making the conversion to

<sup>2</sup> For Plato on love, see Amir (2001) 2017, chapter 9. For Aristotle on friendship, see Amir 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Between parents and children, man and wife, ruler and subjects, for example, Aristotle allows the possibility of viable friendships that need not be limited to pleasure or utility. Yet in every relationship love must be proportionate to merit, while in the friendship of equally good men each gets from each in all respects the same benefits he gives. For Aristotle, friendship cannot be authentic if it goes against justice.

<sup>4</sup> There is a parallel between Aristotle's views of self-friendship and Freud's view of self-love. For both, all love is really self-love; thus, justifiable love must be a way of loving oneself in other persons. Erich Fromm criticizes Freud for considering loving oneself and loving others as mutually exclusive in the sense that "the more there is of one, the less there is of the other" (Fromm 1962, 58). For Fromm, loving oneself is in principle indissociable from loving others, once it is realized that love of self differs from egoism or Freudian narcissism. Not only does the egoist not love himself; according to Fromm, he hates himself and all humanity in himself: the excessive attention he gives himself compensates and dissimulates his failure to take care of his real self.

philosophy itself the first step in befriending oneself. We can clearly see this argument in the custodian of the ancient ideal of friendship in modern times, the Renaissance philosopher, Michel de Montaigne.

## 2. MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

Montaigne is the next philosopher to study for understanding self-friendship on two counts: He makes it the goal of his life and philosophy; and dissociating it from the ancient virtue of the schools, he indicates how to befriend oneself by exemplifying how this is done.

In this case as well, reflection on befriending oneself follows reflection (and experience) of friendship. One of the legendary accounts in Western civilization, as both Montaigne and his older companion describe it,<sup>5</sup> Montaigne's friendship with Etienne de La Boétie shaped his life and lies at the root of the *Essais* (1968). The latter's untimely death left Montaigne in a dire state: his friend had taken with him the knowledge of who Montaigne was; yet the half person (and not the better half) that Montaigne felt he had been in that fusional friendship needed to be completed so that Montaigne could get out of his melancholic and anxious state, let go of La Boétie, and live in serenity his own life: enough to live for others, he says as he retires from public service into his tower, let's live for oneself; yet who is this self? In the process of turning his former interest in the outside world inside, in this conversion unto his interiority, now his sole "physics and metaphysics," Montaigne does not find God as others have done, but rather himself. The process of turning away from friendship and befriending himself instead is what the *Essais* are about.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See the eulogy of La Boétie and of friendship in chapter 29 of Montaigne's *Essais* (1968) and the entries "Amitié" and "La Boétie, Etienne" in *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Langer 2004; Magnien 2004). This friendship seems to be reciprocated by La Boétie: In *Poemata*, nature's secret laws justify the "divine" friendship or love that united him with Montaigne despite the short time it took (one year) to evolve to perfection. Moreover, La Boétie eulogized friendship first: In the *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, he describes friendship as a sacred thing (OC1, 94) because it is the flower of the good life. Because that which assures us of another's friendship is his integrity, friendship cannot coexist with cruelty, disloyalty, and injustice. La Boétie speaks of love in Platonic terms and seems to have also read Plutarch's *Eroticus* (1952). For friendship in early modern Europe, see Rigolot 2005; for reflection about the quality of Montaigne's friendship, see Hoffmann 2015. In honor of Montaigne and La Boétie, maybe, Maurice Blanchot has entitled as "L'Amitié," the 29<sup>th</sup> and last chapter of the book of the same name (1971), which is dedicated to his friend, George Bataille.

<sup>6</sup> The best account of the work of friendship in Montaigne's life and work is, as far as I know, to be found in Defaux 2001. I too emphasize the conversion from friendship to befriending oneself, which lies at the heart of Montaigne's project, but in my own account I point to the diverge of opinions with La Boétie about virtue, pleasure, the mind-body relations and the role of philosophy and religion in forging one's wisdom as the catalysator of the *Essais*, rather than the mere death of the friend (see Amir, *Michel de Montaigne: An Inquiry into the Value(s) of Philosophy*). Viewed through this angle, the *Essais* become an apology of Montaigne toward the dead friend, an *Apologia pro mente sua* which both explains the project of the *Essais* and the diminishing locus of the dead friend in the various steps that separate his death from the final version of the book.

Befriending oneself differs from self-love. In the chapter “on Glory,” Montaigne denounces all forms of self-love<sup>7</sup> and declares that we are somewhat internally double.<sup>8</sup> The self-friendship that Montaigne develops uses this double structure to create a distance from self, which, while different from uncritical self-love or unconditional self-adherence, enables the person to accompany himself. The purpose of this distancing is to enable growth and self-education, to allow for the work of reason on the imagination through various means, not least the use of self-referential humor. The result is a life well-lived, as the self-enjoyment this procedure brings about is the highest state a human being can reach. As Montaigne tells us in one of the last sentences of the *Essais*: “It is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to know how to enjoy our being rightfully” (III.13, 857).

Montaigne quotes approvingly a Spanish adage, “Defienda me Dios de my” (God protects me from myself [III.13]) in his quest to distill imagination and fantasy into reality, and in his fight against his arch-enemies, boredom and idleness. Because he identifies perpetual movement or change as the law of the world and the self, self-knowledge cannot be easily reached; yet through the apparent contradictions, Montaigne recognizes that he is faithful to a master form, which he believes cannot nor should be changed. To reveal it, Montaigne, who learns best by oppositions, educates his judgment by flexing it in various topics over oppositions carefully formulated to enhance his sense of proportion. This process of self-fashioning through the education of one’s judgement finds its limits in the innate master form, which discloses at the same time one’s individuality and the common human nature in which one partakes.

In the process of recognizing one’s limitations in contradistinction to one’s ambitions, the humbling limits of one’s vanity are disclosed; yet we are led to recognize that we cannot do away with vanity as it is what constitutes us<sup>9</sup>: folly is part of wisdom, and getting rid of it we cannot lest we get rid of ourselves. Thus, the tendency to criticize in others what we do not see in us is rectified by laughing at ourselves first, rather than at others. Montaigne quotes approvingly Seneca (1995) commenting on his disinterest in his wife’s fool: “If I have a mind to laugh at a fool, I do not have to look far for one, I laugh at myself. ... Let us not look for our disease outside of ourselves; it is within us, it is planted in our entrails” (III.8, 522). The significance of this procedure is not to focus on a localized mistake, but to understand the general lesson. “To learn that we have said or done a foolish thing,

<sup>7</sup> This procedure is reprised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who differentiates between amour-propre and amour de soi.

<sup>8</sup> “Nous sommes, je ne sais comment, doubles en nous-mêmes” (*Essais*, 1965, II.16).

<sup>9</sup> “I, who boast of embracing the pleasures of life so assiduously and so particularly, find in them, when I look at them thus minutely, virtually nothing but wind. But what of it? We are all wind. And even the wind, more wisely than we, loves to make a noise and move about, and is content with its own functions, without wishing for stability and solidity, qualities that do not belong to it” (Montaigne *Essays*, III.13, 843).

that is nothing; we must learn that we are nothing but fools, a far broader and more important lesson” (III.13, 822). Thus:

If others examined themselves attentively, as they do, they would find themselves, as I do, full of inanity and nonsense. Get rid of it I cannot without getting rid of myself. We are all steeped in it, one as much as another; but those who are aware of it are a little better off – though I do not know... “Except for you, O man,” said that God [at Delphi], “each thing studies itself first, and according to its needs, has limits to its labors and desires. There is not a single thing as empty and needy as you, who embrace the universe: you are the investigator without the knowledge. The magistrate without jurisdiction, and all in all, the fool of the farce.” (Montaigne *Essays*, III.13, 766)

This self-referential laughter, which I argue that Montaigne uses as a main tool of self-education,<sup>10</sup> becomes a generalized cheerfulness through the egalitarian glance that comes with it. That a vision that fosters egalitarian self-respect (I do not count for less, I do not count for more) is conducive to an inherent sense of worth that builds on non-competitive self-esteem has been recently shown by Richard Keshen in *Reasonable Self-esteem: A Life of Meaning* ([1996] 2017). And indeed, cheerfulness is the willed outcome of Montaigne’s befriending himself, as he deems “constant cheerfulness” to be “the surest sign of wisdom” (I.26, 119). That “gay and sociable wisdom” (III. 13, 857), which he endorses as his ethical goal, is the outcome of the egalitarian glance that results from befriending oneself: finding in oneself the mark of human nature (“*l’humaine nature*”), one becomes the friend of humanity, which in turn is a necessary condition for befriending oneself.

### 3. BENEDICT SPINOZA

Keshen notes in the introduction to *Reasonable Self-esteem: A Life of Meaning* ([1996] 2017) that Benedict Spinoza’s ideas lie at the root of his project of devising the notion of reasonable self-esteem, which is also the corner-stone of a way of life that Keshen advocates. Indeed, Spinoza states in the *Ethics* that “self-esteem is really the highest thing we can hope for” (Part IV, Prop. 52, Scholium). Following Montaigne’s ideal, I believe, Spinoza formulates a closely related notion to self-esteem which captures its emotional benefits, the notion of resting in oneself or *Acquiescentia in se ipso*. The combination of “acquiescence” and “in oneself” is a Spinozean innovation: it does not exist in Latin nor is it in accordance with Latin grammar. It is a construct that borrows from Spanish forms of verbs, such as “pasearse,” to take oneself to a walk, or *descansarse*, to relax (oneself), and which may have been created by Spinoza on the basis of his maternal language.<sup>11</sup> It comes

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1 of Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life* (work under contract).

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Negri has first attracted attention to this, but I cannot find the reference.

to denote the resting place one can create in oneself once Spinoza's philosophic redemption takes place.

The redemption Spinoza offers works to replace God's love for men with one's self-love, in a way that is very much in tune with Aristotle's view of friendship. But being post-Christian, Spinoza has this notion indicate much more, first, as it also points to acceptance of one's situation: As Clare Carlisle explains *Acquiescentia in se ipso* has "a threefold meaning, combining self-love, or joy in one's own causal activity; obedience and acceptance; peace and rest" (2021, 116). Second, one's self-love is now the entire content of the philosophic redemption that Spinoza offers to replace the salvation of established religions.<sup>12</sup>

This form of love is reached vicariously, through loving God or nature, which does not love you back,<sup>13</sup> but whose self-love necessarily includes you as its mode. This love is said to arise from a knowledge of God's nature, which follows from the "second kind of knowledge," that is, from scientific knowledge. The latter knowledge replaces the irrational form of thought that works through association, which reflect our body as impacted by its environment, the knowledge with which we live and which defines us before we begin our philosophic journey. The process called philosophy consists in pruning our knowledge and keeping from it that which is true. Emotional evolution follows epistemic changes, affording us gradual access to peace of mind as we better understand, both cognitively and emotionally, who we are, and how we fare in relation to others and the world at large.

For Spinoza, one human being is a god for another, yet genuine friendship can only occur among those who pursue the truth (Lucash 2012). This is so because the *conatus* – Spinoza's concept of striving to persevere in existence, and to enhance its own power, which constitutes the essence of every individual being – can be at odds with another only when we do not seek what is genuinely to our advantage. When we do, as opposed to what we merely believe is good for us, we enhance the being of others as well as ourselves.

Like Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, Spinoza argues that there is no conflict between self-interest and morality or egoism and altruism. Beneath the surface of diverging and conflicting ideas, emotions, tastes, inclinations and prejudices, all human beings have something in common: our true nature is constituted by reason, which grasps the way in which everything in the universe is connected. Thus, the more each one seeks his own advantage, and strives to preserve himself, the more he is endowed with virtue, or what is the same, the greater is his power of acting

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller argument, see Amir, *Redemptive Philosophies: Spinoza versus Nietzsche* (work under contract for *Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung*, de Gruyter Publishing).

<sup>13</sup> It has been noticed that the Spinozean God, although loved, does not love us back. It has rarely been noted that the Aristotelean God, who moves everything else by the force of love ("it moves by being loved," does not love us back as well (*Metaphysics*, book 12, chap. 7, 1072b). Philia cannot exist where the participants are wholly unequal, thus "When one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1159a). Irwing Singer explains, "We love the divine. He does not love us back" (Singer 1984, 108).

according to the laws of his own nature, that is, of living from the guidance of reason. But men most agree in nature when they live according to the guidance of reason. Therefore, men will be most useful to one another, when each one most seeks his own advantage (Carlisle 2021, chapter 7).

For Spinoza, one's advantage lies in attaining to the self-love (love of God) to which leads the process of befriending oneself. This is the process Spinoza's philosophy offers in gradually exchanging erroneous self-advantage with true self-advantage. Thus, befriending oneself is a dynamic process,<sup>14</sup> which is as arduous as salvation is: "For salvation were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare" (Last sentence of the *Ethics*, Part V, Prop. 42, Scholium).

#### 4. NIETZSCHE AND EXISTENTIALISM

This line of thought, which replaces religious ideals, such as friendship with God, with self-friendship or love of God with self-love begins with Montaigne, and continuing through Spinoza, can be found partly in Nietzsche as well, in theory more than in practice. Nietzsche writes: "Love yourself as an act of clemency – then you will no longer have any need of your god, and the whole drama of Fall and Redemption will be played in the end in you yourselves!" (1982, I, sec. 79). However, it is not the self as it is that Nietzsche urges us to love, but our great-grandchildren rather than ourselves, or humanity as transfigured by the overman who will supersede the human all-too-human. The activity or movement of self that was emphasized from Aristotle on, which made befriending more complex than simple adherence to self, is here further problematized as it spans several generations and is possibility just messianic or utopian: it is human potential that is to be loved while one's failure to achieve it must be embraced with clemency.

In existential philosophies of the sort Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir have created the non-coincidence of self cannot be superseded and is the source of much human dissatisfaction.<sup>15</sup> While the earlier projects of Aristotle, Epicurus, Montaigne and Spinoza, and even the utopian project of Nietzsche may be realized, the existential plight does not enable more than unhappy authenticity, in which one aligns oneself with what one knows: the human being is a superfluous passion, who may seek grounding of self in aspiring to be God, yet who necessarily fails because he cannot escape contingency. The doubling of self, to which Montaigne alluded, is here displayed as the unfortunate yet insuperable non-coincidence of being-in-itself and being-for-itself, which explains the unhappy consciousness that Sartre's philosophy advances in *Being and Nothingness* (1984) and that de Beauvoir sharpens in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (2018).

<sup>14</sup> For a similar point on the difficulty of the Spinozean ideal of acquiescing in oneself, see Douglas 2020.

<sup>15</sup> See Amir 2019, chapter 1.

In the remainder of the article, I offer a view that may help us regain the happy consciousness of the philosophies advanced by Epicurus, Montaigne, and Spinoza yet on the basis of the knowledge of the human condition we have since gained.

### 5. *HOMO RISIBILIS*

We experience ourselves as contradictory beings, whose conflicted nature stands in the way of fully accompanying ourselves. Which part should we accompany? Is integration necessary for being one's friend? Let me explore these questions and introduce a tool which can help us enhance our capacity to accompany ourselves no matter what, because it involves both the distance needed to do so and the compassionate aggression that enables our inner change, our evolution toward the ideal we have chosen or toward a more balanced and tranquil approach toward ourselves, toward others and the world.

We are plagued by various contradictions which we experience as tragic oppositions yet which we can transform into comical incongruities. If so transformed, a humorous state of mind is brought about that retains both the tragic and comic elements of the human condition. This state of mind brings along valuable philosophic benefits, which can be especially helpful in the process of befriending oneself. I have presented at length the benefits involved in using self-referential humor elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> Let me briefly note here the main points of importance as far as befriending oneself is involved.

Befriending should begin with self-knowledge, which includes, first, acceptance, and second, working with, ambivalence. It includes a successful process of deliberation which leads either to better coping with unresolved conflict or to conflict resolution. Since I propose to view *intrapersonal* conflict as an incongruity, a discrepancy between one's desires and their fulfillment. Once an intrapersonal conflict is construed as an incongruity, humor, viewed through the lenses of the incongruity theory of humor, is able to bring about recognition of the conflict and knowledge of its components, which then allows an individual to either live consciously with unresolved conflict or facilitate its resolution. Thus, I argue that a humorous mood may facilitate (1) self-knowledge by enabling recognition of conflict and familiarization with its components. Self-knowledge comprises the (2) acceptance of ambivalence, and the (3) inclusion of all aspects of the self and of the situation in which one is involved while deliberating. Further, the humorous mood may provide (4) assistance to coping with unresolvable conflict, or alternatively, promote (5) conflict resolution through (6) successful personal transformation, which is at the root of both approaches to conflict.

<sup>16</sup> For the theory, see especially Amir 2019; the practice is exemplified in various chapters of Amir 2017, and Amir 2018.

Self-referential humor enacts a form of intrapersonal communication. It creates an internal division that constitutes a dialogical relationship, which may be described as a form of compassionate aggression. Reducing the tension between the factions of the self and pushing for further inner change, compassionate aggression is necessary for the development of the modicum of self-acceptance required for self-change. In turn, inner change is necessary for a more wholesome self-acceptance, which is key to the attainment of further ethical and epistemological benefits. This intrapersonal communication is especially helpful for the (self-)education that is central to the practice of philosophical ideals. The internal division that self-referential humor creates may also be construed as a division into internal elements that entertain “joking relationships,” the notion that Anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown coined (1940).

The division that humor enacts between a “better” and “worse” self differs from the traditional division between the “ideal” and the “real.” The latter is unable to minimize the gap between the two poles, which leads to the painful emphasis on the division that feeds on one’s impotence. The oppositions of “compassion” and “aggression,” union and separation, closeness and distance are examples of the contradictions that form the concept of humor. Humor helps cope with contradictions because it associates separate thoughts and opposite emotions and sustains ambiguous relationships with the truth. The contradictions humor manages reflect the opposed viewpoints that form ambivalence as universally experienced. Humor also mirrors the ambiguous position that the truth holds among cherished illusions and extreme perspectives that originate in a lack of proportion.

A conceptual tool is needed to maintain the contradictions constituting the experience we have of ourselves, others and the world. And until we make use of this device, we cannot clearly discern and properly address these contradictions. Similarly, unless we have a way to handle the contradictions between reason and emotions, we are unable to fully embrace the personal, subjective perspective of emotions or the more objective point of view represented by reason, and we certainly cannot hold the two perspectives together. Finally, a mechanism is required to handle the experience of suffering and the tragic sense of life without giving up the zest for life which is necessary for our survival. Humor or self-referential laughter functions as a conceptual tool that answers those needs.

We are accustomed to the experience of contradiction as conflictual and of conflict as painful and unfruitful. After the infuriating experience of our own impotence, we tend to shun conflict altogether or force inner change to avoid despising ourselves. However, internal conflicts cannot be “solved” without a loss, unlike external conflicts which may be forced into resolution by sheer power. Internal bullying or the oppression of one’s tendencies through willpower alone may be productive in isolated instances but is likely to prove counter-effective for sustainable change. We need a gradual path toward self-change that respects our

character; humor can help us change more smoothly than any other device. If we were fully rational, capable of radical and instantaneous change, living without conflict with others, freed of the simultaneous need for others and for independence, we would not require humor. Because we are beset by contradictions, humor is a survival tool. This insight lies at the mistaken yet pregnant characterization of the human being as the sole animal that laughs, *Homo ridens*.

Self-referential humor enacts an intrapersonal communication which is particularly apt for the internal dialogue philosophy presupposes. A critical yet compassionate intrapersonal communication helps self-knowledge and better deliberation, facilitates inward change and enables living with unresolved conflict, or alternatively, enables resolving conflict on a higher level of understanding.

The resolution of the conflict on the higher level follows from embracing the ridicule that obtains for the everlasting gap between one's desires and the possibility and actuality of their fulfillment. The dramatic, if not tragic, way in which we repeatedly experience this inner conflict between what we want and what we have and can have is not radically solved, even by constantly transforming these constitutive oppositions into incongruities. The attempt to overcome what can only be described as the human condition leads not only to failure but also to the concomitant emotional component of repeated humiliation. Its experience confronts us with our ridiculousness, which amounts to our refusal or inability to learn the lesson. Embracing this ridicule and thereby gracing it is all that we can do in those circumstances, which seem to be only ours but in which all the human species partake. While society pits us against each other, realizing how we all share in this ridicule, especially by rejecting this common denominator, it sobers us up and projects us beyond the comical and beyond the tragic that gave rise to the comical. Peace is what we gain in assuming our human condition without unnecessarily suffering from it through the view I have deemed *Homo risibilis*, or the ridiculous human being.

## CONCLUSION

Befriending oneself may be no different from philosophical self-reflection when orientated toward the most auspicious practical outcomes. Philosophy was once a discussion among friends, as friends do converse, informally and wittingly. This may explain the priority that friendship takes in the emotional ties that philosophers appreciate. Once philosophers began teaching for a fee, the situation changed, however.<sup>17</sup> It can be reverted again, despite the fees involved, in settings in which philosophy is practiced together with the ultimate goal of friendly discussion, the self-befriending one owes to oneself.

<sup>17</sup> On this topic, see Amir 2018, chapter 3.

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