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Talking to Strangers

Anxieties of Citizenship since *Brown v. Board of Education*

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Brotherhood, Love, and Political Friendship

IS ELLISON'S "BROTHERHOOD" a reasonable political aspiration? In fact, "friendship" feels like a pretty tired-out term when introduced to political analysis. Who's going to listen to anyone who says, "Why can't we all just be friends?" Is there any point in trying to rescue friendship? In fact, I think it must be rescued, if we are to revitalize political insights that are fundamental to democratic, as opposed to aristocratic or oligarchical, practice.

Political theorists of different periods have often pointed to "something unnamable" as the ideal for relations among citizens. Ellison finally settled on a metaphor to define his vision: "The way home we seek is that condition of man's being at home in the world, which is called love, and which we term democracy" (*CE* 154). Hannah Arendt also fell back on metaphor in *Human Condition* (1958) when she argued for a citizenship based on respect: "Yet what love is in its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere, respect is in the larger domain of human affairs. Respect . . . is a *kind of 'friendship'* without intimacy and without closeness" (243; emphasis added). For her such respect—a mutuality that conveys a commitment to equality and shared decision making—is the prime enabler of democratic political activity. An agile shadow, like Ellison's "brotherhood," it can be arrested only by metaphor and simile. It is love, but in a different context; it is like friendship.

Hobbes, like the others, could not divine a single name to capture citizenly relations:

> There is yet another passion sometimes called love, but more properly good will or CHARITY . . . in which first is contained that natural affection of parents to their children, . . . as also that affection wherewith men seek to assist those that adhere unto them. But the affection wherewith men many times bestow their benefits on strangers is not to be called charity, but either contract whereby they seek to purchase friendship or fear, which maketh them purchase peace. (*EL* 1.9.17)

In contrast to Ellison and Arendt, Hobbes reduces citizenship to fear and divorces self-interest from altruism, as if the two were inherently opposed motives.

Is Hobbes right to sever self-interest and altruism? Or do self-interested political relationships need friendship? Like Ellison and Arendt, Aristotle argued a counter case: "If men are friends, there is no need of justice between them whereas merely to be just is not enough—it is also necessary to be friends" (*NE* 8.1.4). The philosopher John Cooper interprets this remark that justice on its own is not enough to mean that strict legality cultivates a hard sensibility that must be softened through the cultivation of friendly relations with fellow citizens. He writes, "The sense of justice, understood as respect for fairness and legality, is compatible with a suspicious, narrow, hard, and unsympathetic character. . . . The sentiment of political friendship in short, transforms what might otherwise be hard and narrow forms of all the virtues."[1] But when Aristotle argues that friendship, too, is necessary, he means necessary for politics, not for personal virtue. As we shall see, it is not the emotions of friendship that are relevant to politics but rather its core practices. Friendship, he claims, has something to offer to politics that even justice does not. In what sense can friendship substitute for justice? Where does it go beyond it? These are the central questions of this chapter.[2]

Like Ellison and Arendt, Aristotle argued for the interchangeability of friendship and successful citizenship. In the famous discussion of the virtues in books 2–4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* he discusses liberality, magnanimity, courage, and so on, but then a less frequently noticed political virtue appears. This one concerns interaction, speech, and living together with strangers and acquaintances (*homilia, logoi, suzen,* 2.7.13 and 4.6.1–9).[3] Specifically, it is the ability to "behave with propriety" toward them. Like the others, this virtue too is a matter of

hitting a midway point between two extremes. Whereas a courageous person, for instance, hits a midway point between cowardice and rashness, citizens who behave with propriety toward strangers avoid acting, on the one hand, like acquiescent people who accept everything and "think it a duty to avoid giving pain to those with whom they come in contact" (*NE* 4.6.1–2) and, on the other, like domineering people who "object to everything and do not care in the least what pain they cause" (Ibid.). The central virtue of citizenship, then, is a midway point between acquiescence and domination.[4] When Aristotle wants to name this virtue, he too can't. "To it," he says, "no special name has been assigned, though it most closely resembles friendship. It differs from friendship in not possessing the emotional factor of affection for one's associates" (4.6.5). He draws the analogy between citizenship and friendship so far as to conclude, "In every constitution, friendship is as extensive as justice" (8.9.1). Friendship achieves what justice does.

What exactly is justice and what does it achieve?

Aristotle makes attempts on it from several angles, defining it in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* comparing and contrasting just and unjust regimes in the *Politics,* and proposing utopian visions of just cities in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics.* In the definition, he emphasizes the practices that constitute justice; in the comparisons, the outcomes of justice, and in the utopian vision, the problem that justice solves. It is necessary to lay these out, in a short section of exegesis, if we are to understand fully his link between justice and friendship. Once I have laid out the basic terms of Aristotle's account of justice, we will turn back to the question of friendship.

Aristotle famously defines justice as comprising both "universal" virtue and also one "particular" virtue. Justice in its universal aspect is the ability to act in accord with all the virtues: temperately, bravely, liberally, magnanimously, and also justly, in the particular sense of not taking more than one's fair share (*to ison*) and resisting the desire for "unfair gain" whether of money, honor, or something else (*NE* 5.2.6–12). Since his word for "fair," *to ison,* also means "equal," particular justice, or justice as fairness, is also the ability to manage equality properly. When he divides particular justice itself into two types, each consists of a different approach to this task.

Distributive justice, the first type, organizes the allotment of public

goods—honor, money, property. It depends on a "geometric" or proportional notion of equality. For instance, two people get an equal amount to eat for dinner when each is served a portion in proportion to his appetite. Although one diner may get a larger serving than another, each will have been treated equally provided that in each case the serving matches the appetite. Every type of regime has its own principle of desert for deciding how to make proportional distributions: aristocracies, for instance, assign greater benefits to nobly born citizens. Aristotle advocates instead an approach in which people receive benefits from the public store equivalent to what they have given to it, and he consistently argues, for instance, that the rich should contribute proportionally more wealth to the public store and receive proportionally more honor in return. Honor is the good that the poor have to give.

The second type is "straightening-out justice." It ignores the public distributions that set all citizens in relation to one another geometrically and instead straightens out the private transactions that have gone bad between two people. These transactions may have been entered into by the victim either voluntarily, as in contracts and business deals, or involuntarily, as in theft, assassination, false witness, assault, murder, maiming, and abusive language (*NE* 5.2.12–13). Typically scholars have interpreted Aristotle to be recommending retributive punishment, whereby a wrongdoer suffers pain equal to what she has caused. In fact, the task of straightening-out justice is broader. Whereas distributive justice protects proportional equality, the straightening-out type focuses on arithmetical equality, or strict equivalence, whereby everyone simply gets the same quantity of whatever good is being distributed. Take the right to vote as an example. These days one cannot give out more or less of it, but only give it or not. Nor in contemporary democracy is the right to vote distributed in proportion to anything else; every adult gets one vote, even though one voter may be baser and another smarter.

Aristotle explains how arithmetic equality factors into straightening-out justice thus:

> It makes no difference whether an estimable man [*epieikes*] has defrauded an insignificant man [*phaulon*] or whether an insignificant man an estimable man, nor whether it is an estimable or insignificant man that has committed adultery; the law looks only at the nature of the damage [*tou blabous*], treating the parties as equal, and merely asking whether one has done [*ho men . . . adikei*] and the other suffered injustice [*ho d' adikeitai*], whether one inflicted and the other has sustained damage. Hence the unjust being here the unequal, the judge endeavors to equalize it: inasmuch as when one man has received and the other has inflicted a blow, *the suffering* [to pathos] *and the doing* [he praxis] *of the deed are divided unequally* [dieiretai . . . eis anisa]. And the judge endeavors to make them equal by the penalty or loss [*zemiai*] he imposes, taking away the gain [*kerdous*]. (5.4.3–4; trans. modified slightly; emphasis added)

Every citizen deserves an autonomy equal to that of other citizens, but a crime leaves one person as a "doer" and another as a "sufferer." Straightening-out justice is responsible both for restoring and for preserving this equality of autonomy. Agency is the good it distributes according to the principle of strict equivalence.

As a set of practices, then, Aristotelian justice involves, first, managing an equal distribution of benefits and burdens and, second, protecting citizens' agency or autonomy. Equality and freedom are the objectives of this justice, but these are not the only outcomes of such practices. It's time to turn to Aristotle's comparisons of just and unjust regimes in the *Politics* for a closer look at the outcomes of just practices.

The discussion in the *Politics* emphasizes the importance of practices compatible with those discussed in the *Ethics*. Just regimes, for instance, govern according to the rule of law, which fends off arbitrariness and so protects the equality and freedom of citizens (*NE* 5.6.4–6; *P* 3.4.7, 4.9.1–6, 7.13.1–4).[5] And just regimes are governed in the interest of the people, not the ruler. But the most important point of comparison between just and unjust polities turns on their divergent outcomes. The best city makes its citizens virtuous, but there is a second, often overlooked point. The legitimate ruler rules *willing* and therefore free citizens/subjects; the tyrant rules *unwilling*, enslaved subjects (*hekontes* vs. *akontes*: *P* 3.9–10). To be ruled willingly is to have consented to obey (*boulomenos peitharkhein*) as opposed to having been forced to submit (*biazesthai*) (3.10.10). Practices for dealing with benefits, burdens, and autonomy in accord with principles

of equality win as their reward the consent and allegiance of the governed. The just practices of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are therefore meant to achieve not only equality and autonomy but also consent and stability.

But why does Aristotle care about consent? For what problem are peace and stability evidence of a solution? The central problem of politics, conflicting desire, becomes visible just when it is resolved into the vista of utopia, and so I turn now to Aristotle's utopian descriptions. Interestingly, he brings friendship and justice together precisely here. Each is a practice invented as a response to the fundamental human difficulty of conflicts of desire.

Among the utopian states in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is the timocracy. In it equal citizens of perfect virtue rule and are ruled in turn (8.10.1–6, 8.11.5). Among them, concord obtains:

> Concord is not merely agreement of opinion, for this might exist even between strangers. Nor yet is agreement in reasoned judgments about any subject whatever, for instance, astronomy, termed concord; . . . Concord is said to prevail in a city when the citizens agree concerning their interests [*peri tôn sumpherontôn*], choose the same things [*tauta prohairontai*], and act on their common resolves [*prattosi ta koinêi doxanta*]. Concord then refers to practical ends, and practical ends of importance, and able to be realized by all or both parties. . . . Men are not of one mind merely when each thinks the same thing (whatever this may be), but when each thinks the same thing in relation to the same person . . . for thus all parties get what they desire [*houto gar pasi gignetai hou ephientai*]. . . . Concord appears therefore to mean friendship between citizens . . . for it refers to the interests and concerns of life [*peri ta sumpheronta gar esti kai ta eis ton bion anêkonta*]. (9.6.1–2)

The distinguishing feature of the ideal city is not so much agreement as the universal satisfaction of desire. The problem with imperfect worlds is not diversity of opinion but that this diversity necessitates the uneven satisfaction of citizens' wishes. Disappointment and frustration, not mere rational disagreement, are at the heart of politics. The objective of justice is to manage desire and its consequences.

In Aristotle's utopian timocracy the solution to conflicting desire is simple homogeneity. Everyone gets what he wants because everybody wants the same thing. The Greek for concord, *homonoia*, literally means same-mindedness. Everyone wants the same thing because all the citizens have one character. They are all perfectly virtuous:

> Now concord in this sense exists between good men, since these are of one mind both with themselves and with one another, as they always stand more or less on the same ground; for good men's wishes [*boulemata*] are steadfast, and do not ebb and flow like the tide, and they wish for just and expedient ends, which they strive to attain in common [*koinêi*]. (9.6.3–4)

Habermas tried to discover deliberative practices that might, theoretically, achieve perfect agreement, but Aristotle argues that unanimity is a conceptual possibility only if a set of identical citizens can also be conceived. Character is partly a matter of habituating experiences, he argues, and so a theorist of perfect agreement must expect these too to be identical throughout the citizenry, if his ideal is to have any real force. To desire consensus is to have begun to fantasize about a city of brothers, which is exactly what Aristotle calls his timocracy. His utopia flaunts its status as fantasy.

In the *Politics,* Aristotle does propose methods for cultivating homogeneity, arguing that governments should educate their citizens to virtue. But he also acknowledges, even in the *Politics,* the impossibility of a perfect city and the need for ideals for real cities, full of people of only ordinary ethical stature. The description of the timocracy as a city of brothers likewise qualifies his case for homogeneity (*NE* 8.11.5). It is an admission that an entire population of good men is an impossibility—as unlikely to gather as one woman is to give birth to an entire population. And how likely is a group of brothers to get along? Sibling rivalry was not trivial in the Greek imagination. Think of the two brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, whose deaths initiate the action of the *Antigone.* They were supposed to share their father's throne, but one tried to stay in office for more time than he had been allotted. Out of their rivalrous self-interest came a battle in which both died. Real brothers and real polities, too, with diverse and less than virtuous citizens, Aristotle admits, will be persistently troubled by problems of rivalrous self-interest or, in Greek, *pleonexia.*

Our standard translation of *pleonexia* is "greed," but in fact it means

simply "wanting more than"—more than someone else, more than what one deserves, more than is consistent with concord in the city.[6] This idea that rivalrous self-interest, or "wanting more than," is the basic problem of any human collectivity explains why Aristotle likes to think of both friendship and citizenship in terms of the relations between brothers. For him, brothers are exemplary friends, and this is not, ultimately, because they are like each other but because their relationships, especially, are plagued by rivalrous self-interest, and they can remain brothers only if they overcome it.

Pleonexia, the problem of "wanting more than," is not only an elegant description of sibling rivalry; it is also the basic problem that necessitates justice and legal systems. Citizenship, like brotherhood, is plagued by rivalrous desire, which, manifest in politics, can be solved neither by breeding brothers nor ultimately by cultivating virtue.[7] Polities use law to restrain rivalrous self-interest. Friendship introduces a different technique for solving this problem. Friends know that if we always act according to our own interests in an unrestrained fashion, our friendships will not last very long. Friendship teaches us when and where to moderate our interests for our own sake. In short, friendship solves the problem of rivalrous self-interest by converting it into equitable self-interest, where each friend moderates her own interests for the sake of preserving the relationship.

Aristotle's figure of the brothers idealizes not only politics but also friendship. "Friendship" was a broader category for him, as for all Greeks, than it is for us, covering not only companions who are not blood relations but also familial bonds like brotherhood and the father-son and husband-wife relationships. It included, too, the ties among members of a comrade group and among families that habitually played host to one another. In building a utopia out of brothers specifically, and not merely good men, he suggests that friendship itself, as distinct from virtue and homogeneity, offers resources for dealing with the problem of conflicting desire. No matter what size the community, or how virtuous, it must negotiate conflicting desires and their attendant disappointments and resentments. Friends do this routinely, even if actual brothers are often the most rivalrous of friends.

Justice and friendship are analogous in that each is a potential solution to the problem of conflicting desire; both friendship and justice cultivate habits of resolution. Aristotle's parallel between justice

and friendship implies that political consent should resonate with the goodwill that arises in our successful friendships.

Significantly, friendship and virtue are separable for Aristotle. In his analysis, there are ethical, pleasure, and utility friendships. Only the first involve virtue. In ethical friendships, each party has achieved all the virtues; the friends unite out of mutual esteem and goodwill, which blossom into love. In pleasure friendships, they unite only for the pleasure to be had from interaction. Finally, utility friendships are profit driven, and these friends need not feel goodwill nor even pleasure. Importantly, Aristotle makes these distinctions among types of friendship only to blur them, and I will do the same here, providing an explicit explanation of the blurring toward the end of the chapter. Although pleasure and utility friends have not achieved virtue either independently or in conjunction, they do nonetheless establish functioning collaborations, and succeed at bringing the techniques of friendship to bear on rivalrous self-interest. Friendship can arise, Aristotle believes, even in contexts where greed prevails, not virtue. Utility friends may feel neither love nor goodwill, but they do experience consent; they already have a foot in the realm of politics.

Citizens are precisely such utility friends (*NE* 8.9.1–6).[8] As we saw, Aristotle argued that good citizenship amounted to interacting with strangers in ways that look like friendship even if, since they lack the emotional charge, they don't feel like friendship. In positing the category of the utility, or political friend, he suggests that the core practices of the best friendships can be separated from the emotions of love and goodwill and be distilled into habits for resolving rivalrous self-interest into consent in any context—whether friendly, commercial, or political. Contemporary writers about practical political arts like negotiation similarly propose a set of techniques for generating consent that might be equally useful in both friendship and politics. Roger Fisher and William Ury, authors of the bestselling book on negotiation techniques, *Getting to Yes,* write, "Every day families, neighbors, couples, employees, bosses, business, consumers, salesmen, lawyers, and nations face this same dilemma of how to get to yes without going to war" (xi). They remind us that our friendships work best when we and our friends have learned both how to negotiate conflicting desires (for instance, about what movie to see or where to have dinner) and also how to respond to betrayals of trust, such that

both parties can restore their commitment to the relationship. They argue that the same simple insights apply to politics. As if to prove how similar are the techniques of friendship and politics, they market their book with endorsements from both personal column writer Ann Landers and former secretary of state Cyrus Vance.[9]

The core practice Fisher and Ury isolate is, once again, a midway-point mode of negotiation between domination and acquiescence. Like Aristotle's "political friend," the ideal negotiator in *Getting to Yes* is halfway between the "soft negotiator" who "wants to avoid personal conflict and so makes concessions readily in order to reach agreement" and the "hard negotiator" who "sees any situation as a contest of wills in which the side that takes the more extreme position and holds out longer fares better" (xviii). Friends are distinctively able to resolve conflicts of interest without recourse to domination; in seeking out the practical core of friendship we aim to find the basic elements of a non-dominating, nonacquiescent approach to interaction.

What, then, is friendship's core activity? Is friendship mainly talk? Is it mainly companionship? These are the answers people give most often when I ask them this question about friendship's core. Or do its main activities resemble the techniques of justice? Let us turn straight to an examination of friendships in contexts bereft of affect in order to see what remains after the emotion is withdrawn.

Aristotle isolates precisely such emotionless relationships when he speculates about the proper extent of a friendship network:

> But should one have as many good friends as possible? Or is there a limit of size for a circle of friends as for a city? 10 would not make a city and 100,000 is too much; though perhaps the proper size is not one particular number, but any number between certain limits. So also the number of one's friends must be limited, and should perhaps be the largest number with whom one can constantly associate [*suzên*] since living together is the most friendly thing [*philikôtaton*]. . . . Persons who have many friendships and are hail-fellow-well-met with everybody are thought to be friends of nobody, except politically [*plên politikôs*]: I mean the sort of people we call obsequious. (*NE* 9.10.3, 6)

With the last sentence, Aristotle distinguishes the intimacy of ethical friendships, which limits the number of our friends, from political relationships, which require no real intimacy and so can extend to the size of the city. The danger of pursuing something like friendship in political relationships is that one can fall into obsequiousness. This, indeed, is how people ordinarily understand the idea of political friendship, he suggests. But then he continues with a crucial rider: "It is true that one may be political friends to many people and not be obsequious but truly equitable (*hôs alêthôs epieikê*)" (9.10.6).[10] Here his argument harks back to his earlier discussion of the virtues where the citizen who hit the mean between obsequiousness and domination achieved something like friendship in his interactions with strangers. Now it turns out that to get political friendship right, to hit that mean, one must be equitable. At last we have a name for the practice that lies between domination and step-and-fetch-it acquiescence. Equity is friendship's core.

What, then, are equity's elements? First, for a political friendship understood in this rich sense to flourish, friends must feel that their relationship rests on equality: each must believe that the relationship's benefits and burdens are shared more or less equally; each friend needs equal recognition from the other; and each needs an equal agency within the relationship. Aristotle approvingly quotes a Greek proverb that runs, "Friendship is equality" (*philotes isotes*) (*NE* 8.5.5; cf. 8.8.5). Granted, he does not always mean that an equivalent to political equality obtains within all friendships. Father-son relationships, for instance, are defined by "geometric" equality, and in them fathers are superior to sons. In accordance with the proportion that fathers are greater than sons, they should give their sons the greater benefits, and in exchange sons should give them the greater portion of honor and power (*NE* 8.11.1–3; 8.12.5–6). In contrast, friendships among brothers rest entirely on "arithmetic" equality: each brother should receive an equal amount of power, honor, and material benefit (*NE* 8.6.7, 8.11.5).[11]

Notably, such negotiations over how to distribute power, honor, and material benefit are precisely the province that Aristotle assigns to his two types of particular justice. Friends learn how to negotiate such distributions with habits of reciprocity, but polities, he thinks, should employ distributive and "straightening-out justice." His ideal political regime of brothers achieves arithmetic equality, but real cities, he thinks, will inevitably distribute honor and material re-

sources proportionally, and not according to strict equivalence. They will, though, distribute agency according to strict equivalence. They should follow the principles of justice to combine geometric and arithmetic equality so that the overall distribution achieves parity and all citizens have equal agency. If one citizen gets a lot of one good, she gets less of another. Although the rich will give proportionately more in money to the common good and the poor will give more honor, both rich and poor should have the same degree of agency and autonomy (*NE* 8.14.1–4). The important point here is that friendship's basic habits for establishing equality of material benefit, recognition, and agency do exactly the same work as justice. For this reason, friendship can seem like a substitute.[12] Friendship manifests itself in conversation and companionship, but the core practices that are necessary for a relationship to count as friendship are practices to equalize benefits and burdens and power sharing. Strangers can converse, or even hang out with each other, but if they don't act equitably toward each other, or are unwilling to share power with one another, they don't count as friends.[13]

But friendship goes beyond justice, too. The hardest part of friendship is not establishing a decent equality of benefits and burdens but preserving equal agency among all parties. As we have seen, ethical friendships are not troubled by conflicts of interest because, in their perfection, all the friends want the same things. But in all other relationships, friends have conflicting desires; if one is satisfied, another will not be: "A friendship whose motive is utility is liable to give rise to complaints for here the friends associate with each other for profit, and so each always wants more and thinks he is getting less than his due, and they make it a grievance that they do not get as much as they deserve and want" (8.13.4). Insofar as friends think they do not get what they deserve, they believe that a just equality in outcomes has been violated. But when they simply do not get what they want, they feel diminished agency. This latter situation is more common and so more difficult to solve. Friendship does not, however, accommodate the notion that agency and autonomy consist of having total control over one's actions, or of always getting one's way. Friends learn that limits on their agency can be compatible with a full sense of autonomy; they develop an extremely sophisticated approach to the relationship between agency and autonomy. To understand clearly

how friends approach agency and autonomy, we must reconsider friendship's basic act: reciprocity.

Scholars typically describe reciprocity as a practice by which friends preserve parity in the distribution of both benefits and burdens over time.[14] But reciprocity also, and more importantly, allows friends to preserve equality of agency. In his discussion of utility friendship, Aristotle outlines three different types of reciprocal exchange that can make a utility relationship work. They differ not in how they achieve a parity of benefits but in how they handle each party's desire for control. He calls two of these types of reciprocity "legal" and one "ethical":

> Friendship based on utility may be either ethical or legal. . . . Such a connexion when on stated terms is one of the legal type, whether it be a purely business matter of exchange on the spot (from hand to hand) [*ek cheiros eis cheira*], or more liberal [*eleutheriôtera*] in respect to time, though still with an agreement about the reciprocal exchange [*ti anti tinos*]. . . . The ethical type on the other hand is not based on stated terms, but the gift or other service is given as to a friend [*hôs philôi*], although the giver expects to receive an equivalent or greater return. . . . One ought not to make a man one's friend if one is unwilling to return his favors. (*NE* 8.13.5–9)

Utility friends may bargain, simultaneously exchanging things from hand to hand; they may contract for an exchange on stated terms whereby one party provides the first service and the other returns it later. Both of these are legal types of reciprocity. Or, turning to ethical reciprocity, friends may make exchanges over long time periods without depending on stated terms. In all three types of reciprocity equality of benefits and burdens is established by straightforward exchange, although in the ethical relationship the friend who gives first can reasonably expect to receive in return even a bit more than he gave. Presumably this is because, in giving without requiring stated terms, he has also compromised his control, making himself vulnerable to the other party and diminishing his autonomous power to satisfy his own interests. The extra gift he receives repays his sacrifice of control.

The main difference between the three types of reciprocity is the

level of vulnerability and the diminishment of agency to which the parties expose themselves. The barter exchange from hand to hand best expresses what's at stake: not equality merely but the desire of both parties to feel secure in their agency and in their ability to satisfy their own desires. Trust consists primarily of believing that others will not exploit one's vulnerabilities, and that one's agency is generally secure, even when one cedes some elements of it to others. In ethical exchanges, friends trust that their elected vulnerability will not permanently affect their general power to satisfy their own desires. But even hand-to-hand bargaining involves a modicum of trust that neither party has an overwhelming desire to master the other. Reciprocity, Aristotle argues, is the bond of the city because "it keeps people from feeling like slaves" (*NE* 5.5.6). His account reveals the shortsightedness of Habermasian disavowals of bargaining. Bargaining is not fundamentally different from the ethical act of coming to agreement; it is a first attempt at friendship and agreement in contexts where trust is shallow.[15] Bargainers have at least agreed not to violate each other's sense of agency.

Friendship limits a friend's agency and yet nonetheless generates consent and the experience of autonomy. In this regard, friendship is, in Aristotle's view, a model for how political freedom, properly understood, also works. Thus he writes,

> There is little or no friendship between ruler and subjects in a tyranny. For where there is nothing in common between ruler and ruled, there can be no friendship between them either, any more than there can be justice. It is like the relation between craftsman and tool, soul and body [or master and slave]: all these instruments it is true are benefited by the persons who use them but there can be no friendship nor justice towards inanimate things; indeed not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as slave. For master and slave have nothing in common: a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave. Therefore there can be no friendship with a slave as slave, though there can be as human being: for there seems to be some room for justice in the relations of every human being with every other that is capable of participating in law and contract [*ton dunamenon koinonesai nomou kai sunthekes*], and hence friendship also is possible insofar as one is human. (*NE* 8.11.6–7)

Autonomy no more consists of getting one's own way all the time in the political realm than in the sphere of friendship. It consists instead of getting one's way in concert with others, and as modified by them. Friends have different purposes and hopes, and yet they somehow yoke these in ways that preserve not only equality but also each friend's security in his autonomy. Practices of reciprocity coalesce in politics in the form of law and contract.[16] But it is friendship's ability to achieve ethical, and not merely legal, exchange that outpaces justice. The friend who gives something to another without stated terms makes a sacrifice, and when Aristotle at last defines the equitable man, he is "one who from practice and habit does what is equitable and does not stand on his rights unduly, but is content to receive a smaller share although he has the law on his side" (*NE* 5.10.8). He frequently repeats this: a friend disregards his own interest (9.8.2); he will surrender (*proêsetai chrêmata*) wealth and power for friends and country, confident that the honor he receives instead is the greater good (9.8.9). Ethical reciprocity begins with an act of sacrifice, and this is crucial to politics. No political order can meet the requirement that every collaborative decision be a perfect bargain for all parties, for "life is not long enough to repay all debts in utility and pleasure friendship" (9.10.2). Politics thus constantly opens exchanges that remain open for difficult lengths of time, or even forever, and nothing but ethical reciprocity can make such delay bearable. Friendship makes such ethical forms of exchange possible by ensuring that social contexts are shaped by equitable, not rivalrous, self-interest.

What exactly is equitable self-interest? Aristotle explains the idea by arguing that friends are "second selves" to each other. Friendship is the extension of one's interests to include someone else's in ways that annihilate loss:

> In being a friend to their friend, friends care for their own good. For the good man in becoming dear to another becomes that other's good. *Each party therefore both loves his own good and also makes an equivalent return by wishing the other's good.* (*NE* 8.5.5; emphasis added)

One wishes a friend well for one's own sake, because the friend and the friendship have become part of one's self, and when we give things up for the sake of preserving the friendship, we discover that

disappointment and consent are existentially compatible phenomena. "[I]f friendship extends the self, then one is not so much sacrificing oneself, as acting in the interests of this new extended self."[17] In most circumstances, there should be limits to what one is willing to give up, but this does not obscure the basic point. Sacrifice is friendship's fundamental act, and a crucial political one in that it is the only action that reconciles agency and autonomy with not getting what one wants. Whereas rivalrous self-interest is a commitment to one's own interests without regard to how they affect others, equitable self-interest treats the good of others as part of one's own interests. Rivalrous self-interest creates the conflicts of agency that drive the main engine of politics, but equitable self-interest resolves them.

Equity thus entails giving in the public sphere, but there is more to be said about the equitability that characterizes friendship. Clearly, friends don't keep chits recording exactly who owes what to whom. Instead, when friendships successfully endure over time, it is because friends have developed heightened capacities for attending to what each is giving to the relationships and where each needs to repay a gift. Citizens, too, need to cultivate such habits of attention in respect to their fellow citizens. Equity entails, above all else and as in friendship, a habit of attention by which citizens are attuned to the balances and imbalances in what citizens are giving up for each other.

Here we must also confront the counterintuitive idea that citizens who give often and generously to other citizens may be distrusted, despite their equitability. Precisely because they are in a position to give more to other citizens than others give to them, they also often have the power to avoid making themselves vulnerable before strangers. They may be willing to give money or recognition to other citizens, and may do so frequently, but without giving them real power. They may have laid claim to a moral high ground, on account of their gifts, and to immunity from criticism that in itself provokes distrust. A friendship cannot survive if one friend insists on controlling all decisions, for friendship entails self-exposure.

Citizens who act like political friends not only befriend others, making sacrifices for them; they are also willing to ask those others for favors. It's important for us to remember that friends are people to whom we are willing to be in debt while also knowing that we must

acknowledge and repay our debts.[18] Citizenship combines equitable flexibility and a developed discourse of reciprocity with real habits of power sharing. What counts as power sharing will differ with context, but anyone who wishes to cultivate trust across boundaries of distrust must aspire to bring people on either side of the relevant boundary into shared decision making with each other.

How do citizens develop equitable self-interest? Ethical friends achieve their second-self relationships, and develop equitable self-interest, because of emotional attachments; family members do so because of homogeneity and blood loyalty. But what about utility friends? Aristotle writes of their bond:

> All friendship as we have said involves some version of community [*koinoniai*]; the difference between families and comrades [*ten hetairiken*] on the one hand and citizens on the other is that the latter seem to be more in the way of a partnership [*koinonikais*] founded as it were on a definite agreement [*homologian*]. . . . In families the relationship comes not from agreement but from sameness. They are parts of themselves; one's offspring is a second self. (*NE* 8.12.1)

Utility friends develop their relationship on the basis of agreement. They are busier than brothers, needing to negotiate not only specific conflicts but also the continuance of their relationships. That they will inevitably seek the continuance of political relationships is one of Aristotle's biggest claims.

He argues that we human beings live in political communities not by accident but because we desire to share our lives with strangers (*suzên*) (*NE* 9.10.3; *P* 1.1.12, 3.4.3).[19] Living together "does not mean feeding in the same place, as with cattle, but conversing and communicating thoughts and plans" (*NE* 9.9.10) for the purpose of achieving some benefit in common (*to koinêi sumpheron*, *P* 3.4.2; cf. *NE* 8.9.4). That unnamed virtue, which is like friendship but without the emotional charge, is excellence precisely at living together with strangers. This excellence is motivated by our own desire to live with—and ultimately not merely to eat beside but to talk to—those strangers. Insofar as the preservation of the polity is in a citizen's interest, so too is it to her benefit to cultivate second-self relations even

with strangers. For my own long-term good, *because I desire to continue living among strangers,* the self-interest that marks my regard for my fellow citizens should be equitable, not rivalrous.

Now we can see how friendship extends beyond justice. It contributes to politics two things that justice cannot. First, friendship cultivates a habitual expertise at the only practice that converts rivalrous into equitable self-interest. Sacrifice is the only act that might convince others to abandon legal for ethical forms of reciprocity and to seek suppler means than strict barter to preserve autonomy. A signal sacrifice, like Elizabeth Eckford's, declares a context of equitability, not rivalry, to obtain; her gift was one of faith. Second, friendship develops an awareness that our interests, properly understood, include a desire to preserve key relationships. Among these, the political bond especially requires active and constant rejuvenation. Character friendships are long-lasting, but utility relationships are not:

> Friendship between good men is alone proof against calumny; for a man is slow to believe anybody's word about a friend whom he has himself tried and tested for many years; and with them there is mutual confidence in the incapacity ever to do each other wrong, and all the other characteristics that are required of true friendship whereas in other forms of friendship [those of utility and pleasure] nothing keeps such things from happening. (*NE* 8.4.3)

In utility friendships trust is impermanent. The relationship must fight against the corrosion of the ethical type of reciprocity into the minimalist, legal hand-to-hand type. Only friendship teaches citizens how to start over again with symbolically significant acts that regenerate trust where it has disintegrated. Aristotle writes that the Athenians set up a shrine of the Graces, the goddesses of charitable giving, in a public place, to remind men that it is a duty not only to repay service done to one, but also to take the initiative in doing a service oneself (*NE* 5.5.6). Someone like Elizabeth has to go first.

Friendship thus turns out to be not merely a metaphor for citizenship but its crucial component. Why, then, have theorists been so tentative in positing a single name for good citizenship? The trouble is that citizenship engages so many human faculties and so diversely. It is not mere membership in a polity. It is not acting justly only, but

also equitably. To do this requires (a) an *orientation* toward others, a recognition how and why we have an interest in their good; (b) *knowledge* that rivalrous self-interest is the basic political problem for democracy; (c) *habits* as flexible as friendship for distributing benefits and burdens with a view to equality and autonomy; and (d) a *psychological state* that in politics is called consent, but in other contexts, goodwill.

The pull to draw analogies between citizenship, friendship, and justice derives from an instinctual recognition that these are three of the most complex, and also rewarding, of human activities precisely because all three try to convert rivalrous into equitable self-interest. Only friends fully succeed at converting rivalry into equitability; wherever such a conversion occurs, people become friends. Only the idea of friendship captures the conjunction of faculties—the orientation toward others, knowledge of the world, developed practices, and psychological effects—that must be activated in democratic citizenship if it is to succeed. Finally, friendship goes beyond justice by teaching us something that legal justice on its own cannot. Friendship is conceptually important because our experience of it teaches us that self-interest comes in a variety of types, ranging from the rivalrous self-interest of brothers who kill each other for the father's throne, to the equitable self-interest of friends who have secured their relationship. There is no such single thing, self-interest, as some economists pretend. An orientation toward wealth maximization is only one of several varieties.[20]

Indeed, when we talk about self-interest as if it comes only in the rivalrous form, and as if legal systems are all we need to manage it, we are giving law too much credit for maintaining the social bond. The legal system does not on its own restrain, and cannot on its own manage, the problem of rivalrous self-interest. Aristotle's biggest philosophical claim about politics is that our political relationships with fellow citizens are no different from friendships. If we always act according to our own unrestrained interests, we will corrode the trust that supports political bonds. When political scientists, economists, and politicians argue that, if every citizen simply pursues her own self-interest without reservation, the common good will result, they make a sad mistake. No consensually based form of social organization can, over the long term, sustain relationships of cooperation in the face of unrestrained self-interest. The self-interest that marks a

citizen's regard for her fellow citizens must necessarily, if it is to serve her well, be equitable. Our real social capital problem is simply that we have come to believe that self-interest comes only in one form, namely the rivalrous variety, when, in fact, it inhabits a spectrum from rivalrous to equitable. Any effort to cultivate friendship preserves a valuable cultural understanding of that spectrum.

Once again, the guilty party behind our modern tendency to reduce the notion of self-interest to its rivalrous variants and to elevate law as the only tool necessary for dealing with the problem is Hobbes. As we saw at the start of the chapter, he reduced citizenship to fear and set self-interest in opposition to charity. His strong distinction between self-interest and altruism was crucial to his effort to certify institutions as capable of solving the problem of distrust without any help from citizenship: if political bonds rest only on self-interest and fear, and not more broadly on practices like friendship, politicians, working within institutions, can sustain them simply by manipulating the baser human drives. But modern politics and its repeated and, if anything, proliferating experience of civil war has proved Hobbes wrong. Institutions cannot on their own solve the problem of rivalrous self-interest in the polity. There too, if citizens wish to secure the social bond that constitutes their polity over the long term, it is crucial to seek cultural habits based on equitable, not rivalrous, self-interest.

The cultivation of a cultural orientation toward equitable self-interest requires three things: first, recovery of the idea that self-interest comes in a variety of forms; second, recognition that preserving the political bond is in every citizen's interest; and third, an understanding that only equitable forms of self-interest can sustain the political bond, or any form of social bond. These are the philosophical claims that must anchor any cultural form in which the generation of trust is to be prioritized. They are in fact the ideas that already anchor friendship's core practices of equity and power sharing, and indeed, as transposed to our interactions with strangers, these habits of political friendship, equity, and power sharing are what give equitable self-interest, and the ideas behind it, living shape in the public world.

Friendship is the bond of the city, as Aristotle argued, and political friendship is not merely a serviceable aspiration, but a crucial one. Citizens who adopt it commit themselves to pursuing liberty and

equality simultaneously, and to resisting accounts of politics that insist that commitment to one requires short-changing the other. (At present we are in more danger of losing the commitment to equality than the commitment to liberty.) Since most people spend more time practicing friendship than any other activity, getting better at it as they grow older, many of us have a rich intuitive knowledge of what maintains consensual relationships. But how on earth can the techniques and expertise of friendship be conveyed into the rivalrous realm of politics?