Throughout the greater part of the history of political philosophy, friendship has occupied a central place in the conversation. If we draw on conventional historical distinctions, friendship perennially figured as the sine qua non of discussions among ancient and medieval political thinkers regarding good political order and the good human life. As Horst Hutter explains, up to the end of the Middle Ages the idea of friendship was at the core of political thinking: “Western political speculation finds its origin in a system of thought in which the idea of friendship is the major principle in terms of which political theory and practice are described, explained, and analyzed.” It is only in the modern era that friendship has lost its prominence and been relegated to the backbenches of political philosophy. It simply has not been a central concern for political thinkers within the liberal tradition, or any other, in the past five hundred years or so.
This demotion has not gone unnoticed. Hans-Georg Gadamer, for instance, remarks that while justice needs only one book, friendship “fills two books in Aristotle’s Ethics [but] occupies no more than a page in Kant.”\(^2\) Where friendship is actually afforded some attention in the tradition, liberal thinkers are, at best, lukewarm toward it. John Rawls, for example—contemporary liberalism’s most famous expositor—regards it as a “nonmoral value,” but at the same time he nonetheless recognizes that it helps to sustain justice.\(^3\) There is, then, a shift in the history of political thought and in the practice of politics at the end of the Middle Ages. At the dawn of the modern state, the beginning of the scientific revolution, the outset of the spread of universal principles of rights and freedoms, and the advent of international truck and trade, friendship as a political concern nearly drops out of sight. However, as this book’s essays on modern and contemporary political thinkers show, friendship does not drop completely out of sight. One notable example of a liberal for whom friendship was important yet ambiguous was Thomas Jefferson, who indicated in his First Inaugural that friendship may even be more important than liberty: “Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things.”\(^4\) Yet, nearly out of sight has friendship dropped today.

So whither friendship? Commentators often observe that the modern era, and liberal democracies in particular, are so committed to liberty and autonomy—that the individual is emphasized to such a degree—that he perforce becomes isolated from other human beings. This is true as well for liberalism’s critics including nationalists, socialists, and romantics who prize “the nation,” “the people,” the universal proletariat, and “the state” as an abstract entity that subsumes individuals and his intermediate relations, which is the predominant scope of his actions. So whereas liberalism and its offspring liberal democracy promise the individual liberty, the cost of this liberty is often isolation. Loneliness, or as Joshua Mitchell refers to it, “brooding withdrawal,” therefore becomes one of the central experiences people have as liberal democratic citizens. This phenomenon is often recognized and painfully experienced by immigrants and visitors from outside North America and Europe, especially Muslims.\(^5\) Homegrown accounts of life in liberal democracies also bear this out; one need only think of Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* and David Riesman’s *Lonely Crowd* as testaments.
But not only have the bonds of friendship been eviscerated, the bonds between individuals generally have taken on a completely different hue. We commonly characterize the individual’s relationship with others in terms of the contract. In fact, the liberal principle that society is grounded in a contract reaches into other areas of life to the point that we regard all our relationships in similar terms. We come to our private relationships, our loves and friendships, with the same desire to get a good bargain as we do when we purchase a car or a computer. We network, we schmooze, and we realize the “autonomous self,” the ideal to which much of contemporary liberalism seeks. The autonomous self, however, while proudly asserting her independence, is forced to seek respite from her existential solitude in the companionship offered by her dog, the chitchat found on the internet, and the respite found in her lithium.6

If we seek less utilitarian, deeper, or more “authentic” relations, we almost naturally turn to romance, on the assumption that erotic attachments and bodily intimacy are the most profound expressions of connecting to another. Even if this is true, and there are good reasons to think there exist more profound expressions of love, romance fails to help us connect to the wider community, with those with whom we will not enter into romantic relationships. What we are left with is romance in private and contract in public, with the proviso that the contract will dominate one’s private life once the heat of romance runs out of fuel. Romance fails to resolve the problem of how we can integrate our personalities into our political community. Moreover, romance does not apply to so-called Platonic relations, as evidenced by the confusion heterosexual males have regarding their relationships with other males. Beyond engaging in sports and women, modern society sheds little light on how they can share each other’s company. Intimate conversation—which many thinkers in the Western tradition regard as the hallmark of friendship—is rejected as unmanly or “gay.” This, combined with the widespread tolerance of homosexuality, does nothing to alleviate that sense of not knowing what to do with one’s friend or, for that matter, how to be a friend. We seem unable to understand friendship and the act of sharing in terms that are neither romantic nor sexual.7 We seem unable to be at leisure in the Aristotelian sense of activity, and, as he observes in the case of the Spartans, a people incapable of leisure becomes an imperial one.8
The confusion over friendship in the private realm is mirrored in the public when we seek relationships deeper, or more “authentic,” than those marked by mere economic contract. Oft times when in search of this, compassion (and sympathy and pity) becomes the most likely mode of connecting and the surrogate for friendship. There is extensive suffering in our society and in the world at large, and we can identify with the plight of others because we share a common humanity with them. But compassion and its related emotions are unreliable precisely because they are emotions. Our compassion might lead us to help others, but it might simply make us feel good about ourselves, allowing us to indulge ourselves for feeling compassionate. We feel anger at the person, group, or party causing the suffering, but do we merely flatter ourselves for feeling indignation without seeking to alleviate suffering? Compassion as an emotion still depends on our ability to judge rightly about the justice of the case. This inclination toward self-indulgence, of viewing others and ourselves as tragic figures in the theater, is a constant danger in large societies where face-to-face encounters with fellow citizens are limited and replaced by media images meant to promote social cohesion as much as they purport to inform. With Aristotle, one may wonder whether our daily activity of guessing at the character and circumstance of our fellow citizens is in fact a daily act of injustice.

Furthermore, to whom do we owe compassion? Who is our neighbor, as Christians ask? Should we prefer our fellow citizen to someone suffering (perhaps more severely) in a distant land? Why should a national border make a difference for a moral problem so serious? But if we practice “telescopic philanthropy,” as Charles Dickens calls it in *Bleak House,* do we not neglect our own community and ultimately ourselves? What moral status does “our own” have anyway? As Alexis de Tocqueville found, liberal democrats find a distant solidarity with universal humanity because they lack an informed sense of “their own.” The identity of “our own” shifts daily as alliances, affections, and friendships come and go. Many today attempt to anchor their identities in ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual orientation, but their violence, exclusivity, and their basis in the body make these allegiances suspect.

More promising for friendship is the recent attention political theorists have given “civil society,” which consists of those voluntary institutions that include churches, unions, service clubs, interest groups,
and others that mediate between the individual and the state, and that enable its members to enjoy each other’s company while cultivating the virtues and habits necessary for democratic self-government. While this is true as far as it goes, most “civil associations,” as Tocqueville calls them, are based on utility and do not devote themselves and their members to the life of virtue. In short, they are not what Aristotle calls “friendships of virtue” and their members do not live out their lives together, as “other selves,” in those communities. Few groups today have such a thick sense of community, like Amish or Hutterite communities, and few suggest them as realistic political, economic, and social models for contemporary liberal democracies to follow.

Friendship in Politics, Politics in Friendship

Inquiries into civil society nevertheless recognize that those intermediary institutions form a bridge between the private and the public, between individual relations and politics. They show us how the personal becomes political, and back again. The essays in this collection demonstrate that what political thinkers say about friendship informs their views on political order, and, conversely, what they say about political order informs their views on friendship. In the case of premodern thinkers considered in this volume, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and Aquinas, the connection between friendship and politics is close; for many modern thinkers, including Montaigne, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, the American Founders, Tocqueville, Nietzsche, and various social scientists inquiring into “trust,” the connection between personal friendships and politics can become tenuous, though never completely lost.

What then is friendship? If we take Aristotle’s famous treatment as a starting point, friendship seems to involve reciprocated goodwill and some element of utility, pleasure, and moral and intellectual virtue. The essays in this collection focus on one or a few thinkers in differing milieu, and each of them is in some agreement with this general description of friendship. They differ, however, in how they understand the character and quality of reciprocated goodwill, of utility, of pleasure, and of virtue. While some important thinkers—such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam

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Smith, Immanuel Kant, Carl Schmitt, and Jacques Derrida—are not included, those here considered present a wide array of views of friendship found in the Western tradition of political thought. Many of Schmitt’s and Derrida’s post-Nietzschean ideas were anticipated by Nietzsche, whom Richard Avramenko covers; Smith and Kant have received a fair bit of scholarly attention elsewhere and, as representatives of the broad liberal tradition, their ideas overlap to a degree with the Hobbesian (by Travis D. Smith), Lockean (by Jürgen Gebhardt), Tocquevillian (by Joshua Mitchell), and American ideas (by George Carey) examined here; there is some question whether Rousseau supports a view of friendship, though his views on compassion have been documented extensively.11 As part of the ambition of this volume to present a wide array of views on friendship in the history of Western political thought, three of the essays examine thinkers within the Christian tradition in order to uncover the complexities that Christian revelation introduces to politics.

All the thinkers whose works are canvassed in this collection treat friendship as an activity that engages the entirety of the human personality—including the rational, moral, and spiritual—and consider what the engagement implies for our sense of belonging in political society. The ways thinkers approach the great moral, intellectual, and political questions influence their understanding of friendship and the degree to which they account for the rational, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the phenomenon. For example, Thomas Hobbes, for whom human existence is best understood as a perpetual quest for power, writes of friends as patrons or cronies and seems to reject Aristotle’s notion of friends of virtue (though he had friends of this type). Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin treat ethics as a legalistic matter of duties and obligations, which limits the amount one speaks about friendly virtues including generosity. Other Christian thinkers, including Augustine and Aquinas, treat ethics in terms of virtue, and friendship plays a larger and more positive role in their thought than in that of the Protestant Reformers. Moreover, all the Christian thinkers treated in this collection confront the apparent conflict between preferential love suggested by friendship and Scripture’s command to love all human beings as the image of God. Many in the Christian tradition regard friendship as too “pagan” because it prefers one’s own to the stranger and enemy; eros and philia are rooted in love of self, while caritas is rooted in love of God and
neighbor. Augustine and Aquinas regard friendship and *caritas* as harmonious because they consider the noetic consciousness of the ancient Greeks and Romans, as part of the created order, to be in harmony with pneumatic differentiation of Christianity.

The apparent conflict between Athens and Jerusalem, to use a trope favored by Leo Strauss, has important political implications for friendship. The hostility—or, at best, the ambivalence—toward friendship among various Protestant thinkers is one of the roots for the ambiguous place of friendship in liberalism. Both this stream of Christianity and liberalism throw suspicion on particular attachments, which is one reason why such political thinkers as Machiavelli and Rousseau regard Christianity as corrosive to patriotism and community. Comparing the Christian writers in this collection helps clarify these historical matters, but, more importantly, illuminates ways of thinking about friendship and particular attachments in ways liberalism fails to do on its own terms.

**Four Epochs, Four Paradigms of Friendship?**

For the sake of convenience, this volume of essays is divided into four sections, each devoted to a particular era in the history of Western political thought. The contributors, however, treat their respective thinkers in terms of how their thought can inform contemporary concerns instead of as products of their specific historical epoch.

Section 1 covers ancient Greek and Roman thinkers. In his essay “Platonic *philia* and Political Order,” James Rhodes considers Plato’s approach to friendship as found in the *Lysis* as well as the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and the *Seventh Letter*. Understanding Plato’s view of friendship requires attending to the dramatic character of the dialogue because dialogue replicates the activity of friends and assists the reader to cultivate habits of insight and judgment. In short, the dialogue (among other things) helps one to practice friendship as much as it assists one to understand friendship. *Lysis* revolves around a discussion of what it is we love our friends “for the sake of.” Interpreters often mistakenly attribute a utilitarian understanding of friendship to Plato, preferring instead that he should teach us to love our friends “for their own sake.” Rhodes demonstrates the inadequacy of this kind of interpretation and argues
instead that, by attending to the drama of the dialogue, one discovers it is the very “identity of the individual . . . to be an image of the divine.” Participating in the drama of the dialogue, instead of viewing it as a tablet of propositions, enables the reader to understand, and thus to love, the friend for precisely whom he or she is.

Stephen Salkever, in his essay “Taking Friendship Seriously: Aristotle on the Place(s) of Philia in Human Life,” demonstrates how Aristotle regards friendships of virtue as a “prohairetic” activity: “a philosophically informed conversation about our virtues and vices is the definitive activity of ‘perfect’ friends.” Friends assist each other to gain self-knowledge and to become intellectually and morally virtuous. Just as for Plato, this activity primarily takes the form of conversation, of speaking with one another. This vision of friendship informs Aristotle’s understanding of politics. The aim of politics is living well in a polity governed by justice, which justice is practiced by citizens in prohairetic friendship. Friendship and politics are mutually dependent.

In his essay “Cicero’s Distinctive Voice on Friendship: De Amicitia and De Re Publica,” Walter Nicgorski shows how Cicero regarded friendship within reach of those less philosophical, and perhaps having a more direct impact on politics as a result. Unlike his Greek predecessors, Cicero’s “dialogue” on friendship is actually a speech by Laelius on the virtues of his great friend, the Roman statesman Scipio Africanus. Yet, his praise is not without philosophical import, as Laelius provides a phenomenology of friendship while arguing that friendship is nature’s highest gift. For Cicero, friendship and glory follow virtue, which in themselves implant “the seeds and sparks of virtue” in others. Friendship—and its related and more political concept, glory—are in a way the medium by which the virtues are communicated to others. The audience of Laelius’ encomium includes the young, which illuminates how friendship can be extended across generations and influence the life of the Republic beyond the lifetime of the original friends. Nicgorski concludes: “Friendship is likely the most important instrument in the micropolitics of Roman life where constitutional development and leadership turn on political alliances and the give-and-take of personal interactions and relationships.”

In section 2, we turn to thinkers in the Christian tradition, focusing on medieval and Reformation figures. John von Heyking writes in “The Luminous Path of Friendship: Augustine’s Account of Friend-
ship and Political Order” that Augustine agrees with Cicero’s view of friendship as the microcosm of politics. He then focuses on politics as an analogue for friendship by considering Augustine’s treatment of the role friendship plays as a “school for virtue.” He examines the Confessions and On the Trinity for Augustine’s treatment of how individuals encounter the mystery of another person, and the significance that our particularity and that of our friends plays in our lives. For Augustine, knowing another brings one outside oneself the moment one perceives oneself; friendship and self-knowledge are inseparable, which provides the basis for understanding the role of moral development in political community. The crucial role that friendship plays in inducing self-knowledge and moral development is one of the ways Augustine views Christian love and friendship as harmonious.

In “A Companionship of Caritas: Friendship in St. Thomas Aquinas,” Jeanne Heffernan Schindler considers how Aquinas regards Christian love as harmonious and a consummation of Greek friendship. The transcendent dimension of caritas invigorates civic friendship instead of undermining it: “Charity, for Aquinas, not only strengthens justice, but perfects it, prompting the citizen to give his fellows their due ‘spontaneously and joyfully,’ even adding ‘something in excess by way of liberality.’” In other words, caritas takes friendship out of the polis in order to situate it on more solid grounds. The result is a stronger and wider sense of common good than that found in Aristotle.

The Protestant tradition often expresses skepticism toward friendship because of its ancient and Roman Catholic associations. However, Thomas Heilke, in his essay “Friendship in the Civic Order: A Reformation Absence,” demonstrates that Martin Luther and John Calvin lack a language of friendship, personal or civic. He notes that Luther treats friendly relations exclusively in terms of utility, and the closest Calvin speaks of friendship in a theological sense is by equating it with divine election. Instead, the ethical and political thinking of both Reformers is dominated by the language of duty and obligation, not virtue. The polis, as much as the ecclesia, is characterized by solitary individuals receiving God’s grace (for they rejected the category of nature) in isolation from one another: “Concentrating on man’s forensic status before God, Luther preached grace, but a grace taken up individually in the collective, not collectively for the individual; nor, more
modestly, individually *amidst* the collective.” The Protestant believer stands alone before God, and his loneliness would be amplified once the modern world sheared him from God.

In section 3, we turn to modern perspectives of friendship. Timothy Fuller’s essay “Plato and Montaigne: Ancient and Modern Ideas of Friendship” documents the transition from so-called ancient to more modern understandings of friendship. While Fuller eschews “any simple dichotomy between ancients and moderns on this subject,” he finds it useful to contrast Plato’s view of friendship in the *Lysis* with that of Montaigne. *Lysis* ends with something of an aporia as to what precisely friendship is and whether it can be understood in terms other than utility (see James Rhodes’s essay for further elucidation of this in Plato’s own terms). Fuller turns to Montaigne to consider what friendship, freed from utility, consists of. For Montaigne, previous philosophers have deduced their views on friendship from general ideas instead of from the concrete experiences of their own lives. Montaigne’s relationship with Etienne de la Boetie taught him that friendship, should one be so lucky to enjoy it, transcends the ability of philosophy to describe it. Philosophy, being reflective, impedes friendship. For Fuller, Montaigne introduces a Christian and a romantic element into consideration: “Christian because the encounter with a true friend is a kind of moment of incarnation, a revelation within human experience; and romantic because it is an adventure in which the ineluctable temporality of the human condition is challenged by the power of the human imagination to live as if it were eternal.” Friendship therefore takes the form of conversation, an open-ended activity that is conducted for its own sake and expresses humanity’s deepest freedom. Montaigne’s emphasis on the freedom of friendship seems to lend itself to its privatization vis-à-vis politics, which is characterized by necessity and utilitarian relationships. However, Fuller observes that personal friendships, while not the direct substratum or micropolitics underneath civic friendship, would be sustained by an “association based on a framework of procedural rules that would permit the vast range of human possibilities to express itself.” Political order depends on private spaces where people can reflect on the alternatives of friendship and on the self-knowledge that friendships ultimately help to sustain.
We see the dual rejection of ancient virtue teachings and friendship documented in Travis D. Smith’s essay “Hobbes on Getting By with Little Help from Friends.” Contrary to most of the premodern thinkers included in this volume, Hobbes regards all love a species of self-love. For him, the role of friendship in politics can be nothing more than the politics of patronage, which Smith maintains is Hobbes’s primary political target throughout his writings. Hobbes seeks to replace the patronage system, characterized by partisan favors that political actors do for one another, with a neutral state. This requires recasting the meaning of friendship, as well as charity, for politics. Instead of seeing politics conducted by way of a web of face-to-face encounters and personal friendships, as Cicero sees it for example, Hobbes thinks politics must be centered on the neutral administration of the state and that individuals would practice a negative form of the Golden Rule and “complaisance,” which one could regard as the virtue of “fitting in.” Indeed, charity can only be administered by the state because individuals cannot be trusted to judge in their own case. It is enough that individuals leave each other alone. Even so, Smith notes the irony of a philosopher’s depending so much on patronage while seeking an end to it. This irony seems to be blunted somewhat by the satisfaction Hobbes derived from serving as a benefactor for humankind who adopts his political system.

Comparing Montaigne and Hobbes demonstrates some of the limits of treating thinkers as “ancient” or “modern.” Hobbes seeks to establish personal relationships on a low but reliable basis, while Montaigne attempts to surpass ancient and Christian conceptions of friendship by treating friendship as something ineffable. Even so, both treat friendship in terms of freedom, though from different perspectives. Yet both attempt to respond to similar conditions of modernity that are characterized by larger-scale political units and therefore extended human relations.

The United States is a unique hybrid of “modern” commercial (or Lockean) and premodern patriotic and religious principles that generate unique reflections on friendship. George Carey, in his essay “Social Friendship in the Founding Era,” sees a streak of Hobbesian thinking in the ideas of the Federalists during the time of the American founding. However, even their language of self-interest on the part of the
individual, and “aggregate interests” on the part of the nation, is not the same as Hobbes and his Fifth Law of Nature of “complaisance.” Carey documents how the Anti-Federalists were the most likely to utilize the language of political friendship in their opposition to the extended republic. They thought such a system would make people too distant from one another, which would then undermine political friendship and liberty. Carey argues that the Federalists were more likely to invoke the interests and passions of individuals and of factions (who by definition are not friends with members of other factions) because a government based on those “lower” considerations of human nature is more reliable. However, Carey contends that theirs was also a matter of emphasis because they presumed the existence of “social friendship” and common customs among the people. Of the Federalist’s explanation of checks and balances, Carey states: “To even contemplate such restraint suggests the existence of bonds of friendship to the extent, at least, of a framework of shared values that provides the basis for the meaningful exchange of views about what is best for the whole.” They emphasized self-interest and ambition to promote economic activity that would enhance social cohesion. The small republics prized by the Anti-Federalists failed their own test of civic friendship because scarce resources divided rich from poor. In that sense, the Federalists’ view of social friendship resembles that of Aristotle, whose polity must be a middle-class regime that mitigates the perennial factionalism between rich and poor.

Joshua Mitchell considers the paradoxes of this social friendship, or “mediational space between soliloquy and ‘they say,’” in his essay “It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone: Tocqueville on Friendship.” Such mediational “gathering together” is the best that modern democracy can do in terms of political friendship because individuals relate to one another through sympathy (as members of humanity, not as fellow citizens) and money (having replaced honor as the measure of worth in society). Complicating matters is “self-referentiality,” which refers to the characteristically democratic mode of knowing, including skepticism and pragmatism, in which the individual is his own authority, engaged in his own soliloquy about truth and falsehood, and right and wrong, and disengaged from others in their “they say.” Self-referentiality lends itself to “equality in servitude,” manifest in the cen-
tralized administrative state, because only the state constitutes what is public. Equality in freedom can be found in mediational spaces between individualistic soliloquy and the state, in civil associations in which citizens pragmatically carry out their corporate lives. Contrary to Plato and Aristotle, Tocqueville does not think philosophy can help democracy or the practice of friendship, though, unlike Montaigne’s skepticism toward philosophy’s ability to grasp the mystery of friendship, Tocqueville regards the utilitarian aspects of mediational space more conducive to friendship in democracy.

In section 4, we look at two present-day perspectives of friendship. Contemporary liberal democracies are experiencing the crisis of so-called foundationalism, which challenges their ability to justify their own practices and principles, including their communal identities and civic friendships. In his essay “Zarathustra and His Asinine Friends: Nietzsche and Taste as the Groundless Ground of Friendship,” Richard Avramenko argues that Nietzsche’s theory of the eternal recurrence of the same precipitates the need for a completely new kind of friendship. The vision of eternal recurrence moves man beyond both the nation state and Christian fellowship, which had hitherto been the ground on which friendship was predicated. By eroding this foundation the eternal recurrence establishes the need for a “groundless ground for friendship,” which Nietzsche characterizes as “taste.” Avramenko rejects the Derridean reading of Nietzsche of a “friendship to come” because it is messianic and not cyclic. Friendship, therefore, is possible only for those who wander freely and courageously outside the purview of the nation state and Christianity. What form that political unit might take is left unresolved, as necessitated by Nietzsche’s insistence that one with taste embraces danger and welcomes both the exception and the unexpected.

Jürgen Gebhardt’s “Friendship, Trust, and Political Order: A Critical Overview” concludes the volume. Even though the twentieth century severely challenged our confidence in the ability of rationality to sustain a just political order, as evidenced by the emphasis on enmity and domination among the writings of Carl Schmitt and neo-Hobbesians including Hans Morgenthau, Gebhardt finds an enduring reliance on trust among the ideas and practices of liberal democracy. Beginning in the Middle Ages with the concept of *fides* and finding
major expression in John Locke, Scottish common sense philosophy, and analyzed by a series of social scientists including Samuel Huntington, Robert Putnam, and Francis Fukuyama, trust as an expression of political friendship endures at the core of liberal democracy. Few have analyzed trust as friendship in a philosophical manner, tending instead to apply uncritically the assumptions of American constitutionalism and theories of consent to their analyses without inquiring into the nature of the common world that these phenomena require. Gebhardt draws on Thomas Reid’s and Eric Voegelin’s formulations of common sense, as well as Hannah Arendt’s neo-Aristotelian notions of political friendship, and finally Aristotle and Plato, to formulate what political friendship means within the parameters of modern liberal democracy: “[I]t refers to the public sphere of common meanings sustaining a common reference world that signifies common purpose, action, and aspiration of the members of society. They live together in virtue of the binding force of trust.”

The Symbiosis of Personal and Political Friendships

The essays in this volume indicate that private friendships and political friendship are never completely detached. Moreover, as the essays on Plato, Aristotle, the American founding, and even Hobbes bring out, “lower” forms of friendship (for example, utility) require a “higher” form for them even to be intelligible. As Socrates in the *Lysis* argues, for every “use” there is something higher for which it is “for the sake of,” whose nature dictates how those uses are to be understood. These two types of friendship, while separate, require one another; they share the same world and are, literally, symbiotic. All the essays demonstrate the ways that personal friendships inform and sustain the health of political society, which suggests how personal friendships are more authentic or satisfying than political society for human aims and aspirations for the good life. Even for a thinker like Montaigne, who perhaps separates private friendships from political society more drastically than the other thinkers included in this volume, the two realms inform and sustain each other. The persistence of the connection between personal friendships and the political society they sustain and that in turn sus-
tains and protects them—as well as the variety of different forms that these thinkers express that connection—suggest the need for practical judgment in balancing political friendship with the recognition that political friendship can never be identified with the heights that personal friendship can achieve. We in the twenty-first century still grapple with Aristotle’s insight that the political friendship of the polis is an analogy of the highest kinds of friendship, and that the city ceases to be a city the moment it attempts to obtain that highest form of friendship, as seen in his criticism of Socrates’ (perhaps ironic) proposal for communism among the city’s rulers.12

Insofar as the essays illuminate the relationship between a thinker’s ethical teaching and friendship, each of them raises the question of how friends regard the mystery of the other’s character. Is it self-projection, as Hobbes would have it? Do they experience their friend as an irruption of complete otherness, as Augustine, Montaigne, and Nietzsche seem to argue at times? While self-projection is normally associated with egoism, complete otherness seems an unintelligible ideal because one can hardly even know something without relating it to something one already knows. Or, as Socrates indicates in the Lysis, regarding friendship as a relationship of dissimilars implies that one would befriend one’s enemy, thereby rendering “friend” and “enemy” meaningless.

The answer may be in recognizing that friendship consists of similarity and dissimilarity, and the key is to find the most appropriate conceptual language to describe it. The symbols of “conversation,” “taste,” and “image” of the divine or of God dominate the thinking of those who regard the practice of friendship as preeminent activity of human beings, and politics as secondary. The language of “law” and “duty” dominates the thinking of those distrustful of that view, and emphasize the necessity of the divine law, neutral state, or the market to restrain the propensity of friendships to operate as cronyism. The “law” and “duty” side considers the “conversation” side to be idealistic and overly reliant on people’s virtue, while the latter regards the former as idealistic and depending too much on state power to sustain political society at the expense of the character of individuals and their relationships with one another. Whichever way the reader is inclined to think, the essays in this volume demonstrate the urgency of considering the problem of friendship’s relationship with political life, and its intractability.
Notes


5. Recent novels from and about the Muslim world document the loneliness experienced in liberal societies. For example, the Muslim Turks in Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow* (trans. Maureen Freely [New York: Knopf, 2004]) resist modernization, or “Europeanization,” because it dissolves communal solidarity that is essential to their religious existence. The loneliness of Ka, the poet and main character of the novel, is exacerbated because he rejects Turkish society but cannot adapt to the individualistic sensibilities of Germany where he resides. Similar themes appear in Nahid Rachlin’s *The Foreigner* (New York: Norton, 1999), which is about an Iranian biologist who leaves the United States to return to her homeland. Her stomach ulcer symbolizes the empty void in her soul caused by the restless but meaningless and solitary existence she led there (despite or because of being married to an American). Thus she chooses restrictive life in nonliberal Iran—where at least she can find meaningful friendships—over her prosperous and free, but withdrawn, existence in the West. Similarly, studies of jihadists demonstrate that loneliness and the desire for friendship play a crucial role in recruitment. Marc Sageman argues that friendship networks outweigh ideology as a factor to recruitment: “Relative deprivation, religious predisposition, and ideological appeal are necessary but not sufficient to account for the decision to become a mujahed. Social bonds are the critical element in this process and precede ideological commitment” (*Understanding Terrorist Networks* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], 134). Insofar as the war against jihadist groups is a war of political ideas and practices, the problem of friendship for liberal democracy must be regarded as being the most important factor to address.

6. Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, when victory for liberal democracy was fully apparent, a new wave of popular music burst on the American scene. The so-called Grunge Movement, which is closely associated...
with Generation X, featured angst-ridden lyrics expressing anger, frustration, ennui, sadness, fear, depression, and, in general, the loneliness and alienation of the liberal democratic world. A leading band from this movement, Nirvana, recorded a very successful song titled “Lithium,” which opens with and repeats sarcastically: “I’m so happy, ’cause today/I found my friends . . . /They’re in my head.” Nirvana frontman, Kurt Cobain, committed suicide not long after penning these lyrics.


10. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1155b30–1156a5.
